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Three plays by
William Archer

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Three Plays

by

WILLIAM ARCHER

With Foreword

by

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

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HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

NEW YORK

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HOW WILLIAM ARCHER IMPRESSED BERNARD SHAW

William Archer, though the most lucid and unequivocal of writers, was in person and manner probably the most deceptive man of his time. Nobody could have been less of an impostor in character; yet he took in all his contemporaries, even those who were fairly intimate with him. One of the cleverest of our younger essayists has described him as a dour Scot, without the slightest sense of humor, hard, logical, with an ability that was always in cold storage. This was not a stranger's deduction from his writings. It was a personal impression so strong that no study of his writings could quite dispel it. Not until the last London journalist who has met him has perished will William Archer be judged by his writings; and even in them there is an emotional reticence that will leave an incomplete picture of the man, though they will do him more justice than he ever did to himself. For the present, there is a fabulous Archer who is extremely unlike the real Archer, and much less amiable.

Had the fabulous Archer been the real one, our long friendship would have been impossible: indeed any friendship with him would have been impossible. Fortunately the real Archer was, like myself, the victim of an unsleeping and incorrigible sense of humor: the very quality (or fault) which the fabulous Archer utterly lacked. No doubt when we first met as young men of the same age some forty-five years ago, I interested him as a person free from certain superstitions that had been oppressive to him; but I interested him still more by being so laughably free, not only from superstitions recognized by him as such, but from many conventions which he had never dreamt of chal-

lenging, that I appealed irresistibly to him as an incarnat joke. The Shavianismus tickled him enormously; and h was never tired of quoting not only my jokes, but m heresies and paradoxes, many of which have by this tim become platitudes. The way to get on with Archer wa to amuse him: to argue with him was dangerous. Th invaluable precept of Robert Owen: "Never argue: re peat your assertion," established me with Archer on th footing of a privileged lunatic, and made quarrels impossibl

Archer had the air of a stoic: he was really a humoris to whom a jest was worth more than most of the thing common men prize. For instance, he was unlucky enoug to have trouble with one of his eyes. He went to an oculis and returned so radiant that I concluded that the oculis had cured him. On the contrary, the oculist had diagnose amblyopia. "What is amblyopia?" said Archer. "Well, said the oculist, "the eye is quite perfect. There is n lesion or defect of any sort. A first class eye. Only, it doe not see anything." Archer found this so funny that h thought half his sight well lost for the fun of repeating it t me and everyone else.

Another instance, in which money was at stake. Thoug a thoroughbred Scot, he was usually so indifferent to i so untouched by vulgar ambition or by the least taint snobbery, so sensibly unpretentious in his habits, so conten to go to the pit when he paid to enter a theatre or even i the steerage when he made a long voyage, that nothing bu a stroke of luck could ever have made him rich; but whe he got married he conscientiously set to work to accumu late savings; and by doing too much journalism he su ceeded in making some provision for family contingencie Unfortunately, on the best advice, he invested it all i Australian banks; and Australian banks presently wen smash. I have known men reduced to fury and despair b less serious losses. Archer was sustained and even elate by our friend John Mackinnon Robertson. Robertso not at that time the Right Honourable (he had not y entered on the distinguished parliamentary career whi

he managed to combine so oddly with an equally distinguished literary activity) had just written an economic treatise entitled The Fallacy of Saving. He sent a copy to Archer; and it arrived simultaneously with the bad news from Australia. Archer at once sat down and wrote "My dear Robertson: I am already completely convinced of the fallacy of saving, thank you." He came to me to tell me the story, chuckling with the enjoyment of a man who had just heard that his uncle had died in Australia and left him a million. Had he been a giggling fribble, incapable of his own distress, I should have had no patience with him. But, as I shall presently shew, never was there a man less a trifler than William Archer. He laughed at his misfortunes because things of the mind were important to him (humor is purely mental), and things of the body and of the pocket, as long as they stopped short of disablement and painful privation, relatively trivial. The sight of one eye did not matter provided he could see with the other; and he, who set very little store by what people call good living, could hardly be expected to feel much concern about savings whilst he could pay his way with earnings: a comic speech consoled him for both losses.

Why was it, then, that he produced so strong an impression of dourness, unbending Puritan rigidity, and total lack of humor?

The explanation is that in spite of his lifelong preoccupation with the theatre, he was not a dramatic, self-expressive person. Physically he was a tall upstanding well built good-looking Scot, keeping his figure and bearing to the last. He had an agreeable voice and unaffected manners, and no touch of malice in him. But nobody could tell from any external sign what he was thinking about, or how he felt. The amblyopic eye may have contributed to this air of powerful reserve; but the reserve was real: it was a habit that had become first nature to him. In modern psycho-pathological terms it was a repression that had become a complex. Accustomed as I was to this, he amazed even me once. He had just completed his transla-

tion of Ibsen's Little Eyolf; and he read it to two or three friends of whom I was one. His reading was clear, intelligent, cold, without a trace of emotion, and rather wooden in the more moving passages. When he came to the last pages he suddenly handed me the book, and said, formally and with a marked access of woodenness, "Shaw: I must ask you to finish the reading for me. My feelings will not allow me to proceed." The contrast between the matter and the manner of this speech would have been irresistibly comic had any doubt of the sincerity of his distress been possible. I took the proof-sheets in silence, and finished the reading as desired. We were face to face with a man in whom dissimulation had become so instinctive that it had become his natural form of emotional expression. No wonder he seemed a monster of insensibility to those who did not know him very intimately.

To explain this, I must cast back to the year 1730 as a date in religious history. In that year, just before Wesley began Methodism in England, a Scots minister named John Glas was cast out by the General Assembly of the Kirk in Scotland as a Congregationalist heretic. Glas thought this was so much the worse for the Kirk in Scotland. Bible in hand, and strong in the Protestant right to private judgment, he founded one of the innumerable Separatist sects that arose in the eighteenth century. Shakespear would have called him a Brownist. He maintained that any group of persons organized according to the instructions of St. Paul to Timothy, and qualified as godly according to the prescription of Matthew, was independent of any Kirk or General Assembly or ecclesiastical authority whatsoever, and was answerable to God alone. The aim of his own group was the realization of Christ's kingdom as defined in the famous reply to Pilate "My Kingdom is not of this world." Glas's son-in-law, Sandeman, carried this doctrine to England, where the groups became known as Sandemanians.

Now of Separation there is no end until every human being is a Separate Church, for which there is much to be said. The Separatists continue to separate. In 1804 John Walker

Bachelor of Divinity (for so I construe the letters B.D.) and Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, separated himself from the Episcopal Church of Ireland, and founded a sect called by him the Church of God, and by the profane The Walkerites. Its tenets resembled those of the Glasites so closely that there was talk of an amalgamation; but the Glasites were Sabbatarians; the Walkerites held that Christ had discarded the Sabbath; and so they could not agree. Anyhow Walkerism was superfluous in Scotland, where its numbers were often so small that worship among them was a family affair conducted by the head of the household, assisted by such male members of the sect as happened to be present. As the Glasites had flourishing congregations in many centres, Walkerite children would be sent to Glasite Meeting when there was no Walkerite Meeting to send them to.

In the second generation of Walkerites, a Miss Walker married a Mr. Archer. And one of their sons complicated the faith by marrying a daughter of James Morison, one of the shining lights of Glasism. From that exogamous alliance William Archer sprang. If ever there was a doubly predestined heir of grace, William, one would think, was he. And, on the whole, he lived up to his antecedents. But God fulfils himself in many ways, and often in extremely unexpected ones. As William grew up, he felt obliged to pursue his hereditary Separatism to the point of separating himself not only from the Separatists, but from the curious fetish worship of the Bible, and the idolization of Christ, with which all the sects and Churches were still saturated.

This looks like a complete explanation of the reserve that was a second nature with him. But, if you are an English reader, do not infer too much from your ignorance of Scoto-Norwegian Separatism. Long before Archer's views had formed themselves sufficiently to threaten a schism in the family if he gave voice to them, he had profited, without the smallest friction, by the fact that both Walkerites and Glasites regarded religion as too sacred to be made a subject of private conversation. They actually barred private prayer, and not only neither asked their children controversial ques-

tions nor permitted them to put any, but would not allow even a catechism to come between them and their God. In their view, you were either damned or saved by your own nature and the act of God; and any attempt to force God's hand in the transaction was sedition in His kingdom. Thus William was never driven to lie about his beliefs or about the family beliefs. He was simply not allowed to talk about either. He was, however, expected to go to Meeting when there was a meeting (Walkerite or Glasite) within reach, and not to laugh when his sense of humor got the better of the solemnity of the occasion. In the latter observance the Archer children were by no means uniformly successful. In William as in Mark Twain, the meetings had a marked homeopathic effect.

Another feature of Separatism which favored his freedom of thought was its anti-clericalism. The common English association of clericalism with piety is often misleading. The revolt against institutional religion which moved George Fox to regard a priest of any denomination as Mr. Winston Churchill regards a Bolshevist, and to revile a church as a steeple house, has produced all the Separatist sects, and has in our day invaded even the Church of England in the person of the most intellectually eminent of its dignitaries. William Archer's father would have been surprised if anyone had called him an anti-clerical; but he had the Separatist habit of assuming that parsons are inadmissible acquaintances. The family atmosphere, if not explicitly anti-clerical, was, to say the least, not prelatical.

Archer's brother and collaborator in their translation of Peer Gynt tells me that he never heard his father say a word of any kind on any religious subject. This gives in a single sentence a vision of the extraordinary reserve imposed by the Separatism of Glas and Walker, surviving as a habit long after the original impulse had lost its fervor, and had even provoked a reaction. The reaction in William Archer carried him to a Modernism which would have been taken by Glas and Walker as unmistakable evidence of his predestined damnation; but the habit of reserve remained.

It was reinforced as he grew older by the clash of his political opinions with those of the Glasites, who interpreted Christ's declaration that His kingdom was not of this world as implying a duty of unquestioning submission to all duly constituted secular authority. This view had settled down into simple political Conservatism; and when Archer's inner light led him to a vigorous Radicalism, it became necessary for him to extend his reserve from religion to politics, or else grieve his people very sorely, a cruelty of which he was quite incapable. He was hereditarily affectionate, and even suffered from a family inability to control his diaphragm (I borrow this quaint diagnosis from an expert) which made it impossible for him to command his voice when he was deeply moved, which explains both why he could not finish reading Little Eyolf and why up to the moment of relinquishing the attempt he had had to constrain himself so rigidly as to seem a wooden image rather than a very emotional man.

He was not himself conscious of the extent to which the Glasite diathesis influenced him. I do not believe that he knew or cared anything about the constitution or origin of Glasism: all he could tell me to satisfy my curiosity as a connoisseur in religious beliefs was that the performance, as he called it, consisted mainly in his grandfather reading the Bible phrase by phrase, and extracting from every phrase some not immediately obvious significance, the more far-fetched and fantastic the better. The grandson was interested neither in Kirk nor Conventicle, but in the theatre. He was prepared to attend to Shakespear, but not to Glasite hermeneutics. He had a certain admiration for his grandfather's ingenuity as an exegete, and was rather proud of him; but he soon learnt to defend himself from his expositions by an acquirement that often stood him in good stead in the theatre later on. He could slip his finger under the next page of his open Bible; go fast asleep; and turn the page without waking up when the rustling of all the other Bibles as their readers turned over struck on his sleeping ear and started a reflex action.

If I had known this when I attempted to read my first play

to him I might not have abandoned it for years as an un finished failure. He was utterly contemptuous of its con struction; but this I did not mind, as I classed constructe plays with artificial flowers, clockwork mice, and the like Unfortunately, when I came to the second act, something— possibly something exegetic in my tone—revived the ol protective habit. He fell into a deep slumber; and I softly pu the manuscript away and let him have his sleep out. Whe I mentioned this to our friend Henry Arthur Jones he re minded me of a member of the *Comédie Française,* who o being remonstrated with for sleeping whilst an author wa reading a play, said "Sleep is a criticism." This was my ow view of the case; and I might never have meddled with th stage again had not Archer unconsciously discounted the inc dent one day by telling me the tale of his famous grandfathe

Thus he never came to know what his grandfather's re ligion was. He dismissed it, and most of Scriptural theo ogy with it, as flat nonsense. And from this estimate h never retreated to the end of his days. It may seem strang that a man whose literary bent was so strong that he mad literature his profession, whose ear was so musical that h could write excellent verse, and whose judgment was so r spected that he was accepted as the most serious critic his day, should be able to read the dregs of Elizabethan dram and not to read the Bible; but the fact remains that when was writing my preface on Christianity (to Androcles an the Lion) and, having just read the New Testament throug asked him whether he had read the Gospels lately, and wh he made of them, he replied that he had tried, but "cou not stick it." The doctrine was nonsense to him; and he ha no patience with it because he took no interest in it. I plead that though Matthew had muddled his gospel by stringi sayings together in the wrong order, a more intelligible a rangement of them could be discovered by reading the oth evangelists; but this produced no impression on him: t subject simply bored him; and he rather resented any a tempt on my part to give the slightest importance to This was a very natural consequence of dosing a clev

child prematurely with mental food that Ecumenical Councils have before now failed to digest; and parents and school committees will do well to make a careful note of it; but in Archer's case the intolerance it produced became a quality, as his book on India proves. There was no morbid nonsense about understanding everything and pardoning everything in the Archer family. The glimpses I had of them were quite convincing as to their being healthy minded sensible open air colonially rejuvenated people who, having to keep an inherited form of worship from making social life impossible, instinctively avoided sophistry and speculation, and took their intellectual course simply and downrightly. When, in what was then called The Conflict Between Religion and Science, William Archer took the side of Science, he broke away as cleanly and confidently as Glas had broken away from the Assembly or Walker from the Church of Ireland. He expressly denied having ever had any internal struggle or qualm. His only difficulty was to maintain his convictions without making his parents unhappy; and the Separatist reserve made it quite easy to do this whilst he lived with them.

When he came to London and began to write for the Secularist press, thus breaking the Separatist silence, he resorted to a *nom de plume*, for which, in those days, there were other reasons than family ones. A then future president of the National Secular Society had been actually imprisoned for a year for publishing in The Freethinker, his weekly journal, a picture of Samuel anointing Saul, in which the costumes and accessories were those of a modern hairdresser's shop; and until the expiration of the sentence Archer had to help with a monthly review which the victim of persecution edited for his more scholarly and fastidious followers. The leaders of the Secularist movement, including at that time Mrs. Besant, were delighted to welcome Archer as a brilliant young recruit, and were somewhat taken aback when he would not enter into intimate social relations with them lest they should meet his parents, and quite simply told them so in his most expressionless manner. But for the strained

relations which ensued, and for his preoccupation with the theatre, he might, like Robertson, have become a familiar figure in the pulpit of South Place Chapel, and been as definitely associated with Rationalism as Mr. Edward Clodd. As it was, his position was sufficiently affirmed to make me ask him one day what his parents had to say about it. His reply was that the subject was never mentioned between them, but that he supposed they must have noticed that he did not attend any place of worship. Clearly there was no bitterness nor bigotry in the matter; and the fact that there was no resistance to break down made it impossible for a man of Archer's affectionate sensitiveness not to shield his father and mother from every contact with his heresy and its associations that could possibly be avoided without a sacrifice of his convictions.

Presently another interest came into his life. One showery day I was in New Oxford Street, probably going to or from the British Museum reading room, when I saw Archer coming towards me past Mudie's, looking much more momentous than usual. He seemed eight feet high; and his aspect was stern and even threatening, as if he were defying all Oxford Street, buses and all, to take the smallest liberty with him. His air of formidable height was partly due, perhaps, to his having draped himself in a buff-colored mackintosh which descended to his calves. But it was quaintly aided by the contrast of his inches with those of a lady who clung to his arm to keep pace with his unmerciful strides. She had a small head and a proportionately small comely face, winsome and ready to smile when not actually smiling. I had never seen Archer with a woman on his arm before, nor indeed concerning himself with one in any way; and, as the future author of Man and Superman, I feared the worst. And, sure enough, I was immediately introduced to the lady as his selection for the destiny of being Mrs. Archer.

The marriage seemed a great success. Mrs. Archer fitted herself into the simple and frugal life of her husband quite naturally, caring no more for fashion or manufactured pleasures and luxuries than he did. There came a wonderful son

he who figures in the correspondence of Robert Louis Stevenson as Tomarcher. Mrs. Archer found the world paradise enough first with her Willie, and then with her man and her boy. She tolerated me and indulged me as an incarnate joke because he did; and I saw rather more of him after his marriage than before it, instead of less: a rare privilege for a bachelor friend.

But the more Archer's slender means obliged him to put Mrs. Archer and the boy first, and literature comparatively nowhere, the more I, having among my budget of novels that nobody would publish a book called The Irrational Knot (meaning the marriage tie), began to doubt whether domesticity was good for his career. At last I read an anonymous article on one of Archer's subjects which seemed to me a poor one. I was on the point of abusing it roundly to him one day when, to my consternation, he said, just in time, that he had written it. My concern was not because I thought the article unsatisfactory: every writer produces unsatisfactory articles occasionally. But that, good or bad, I had not recognized it as his: a failure unprecedented so far, proved to me that he had lost some of the brilliancy and unmistakable individuality of style which had attracted me in his articles in The London Figaro long before I made his acquaintance. I knew that the way to make money in journalism is to turn out rapidly great quantities of undistinguished stuff; and I knew also that when a man marries he gives up his right to put quality of work first, and income second. I did not conceive it possible at that time that I should ever become a married man myself. With an artistic recklessness which shocks me in retrospect I told Archer that Mrs. Archer was spoiling him, and that he would be a lost man unless he broke loose. He said, with that wooden formality which was the surest sign that he was deeply moved, that he must ask me not to visit his house whilst I held opinions so disparaging to Mrs. Archer.

I was not in the least offended. Indeed I was never offended by anything Archer ever said to me or wrote about me, though he sometimes expressed a quite unnecessary remorse

for speeches or articles which he supposed must have been painful to me. For some time I remained under his interdict and saw nothing of Mrs. Archer. Then the unexpected happened. Archer did not break loose; but Mrs. Archer did. Let me not be misunderstood. There was no gentleman in the case. It was much more interesting than that.

I forget how long Mrs. Archer remained a dropped subject between us; but it was Archer himself who resumed it. I found him in a state of frank anxiety which in him indicated considerable distress of mind; and he told me that Mrs. Archer fancied that there was something the matter with her, though she was, as he believed, in perfect health. Now Mrs. Archer, like her husband, was not at all the sort of person her appearance suggested. She seemed dainty, unassuming, clinging. Really, she was a woman of independent character, great decision and pertinacity, and considerable physical hardihood. This I had half guessed that day in Oxford Street; but I kept the guess to myself, as it might have been taken as a wanton paradox until the sequel bore it out. When Archer told me of his perplexity I shared it, and could think of nothing to suggest.

To the rescue of this male helplessness came a remarkable lady from America, Miss Annie Payson Call, authoress of a book entitled Power through Repose, and of a system, partly manipulative, partly sympathetic, of straightening out tangled nerves. Miss Call had the same sort of amiability as Mrs. Archer, and the same overflow of energy for which selfishness was not enough. She tackled Mrs. Archer; she tackled me; she tackled everybody; and as she was a charming person, nobody objected. But she found in Mrs. Archer something more than the passive subject of a cure. She found a pupil, a disciple, and finally an apostle in England. Mrs. Archer's vocation also was for healing sore minds and wandering wits. With what seems to me in retrospect a staggering suddenness, though in fact she had to see Tom through to his independent manhood first, she created the nerve training institution at King's Langley which she still directs. Literary people in the eighteen-nineties used to write futil

sequels to Ibsen's Doll's House: Mrs. Archer found a real and perfectly satisfactory sequel. She became an independent professional woman most affectionately married to an independent professional man, the two complementing instead of hampering each other; for in practical matters he was full of inhibitions and diffidences from which she was vigorously free. Incidentally I ceased to be one of Willie's bachelor encumbrances. Mrs. Archer, having developed considerably more practical initiative and ability than ever I possessed, took me in hand fearlessly on her new footing, and admitted me, I think, to as much of her friendship as I deserved.

Thus Archer's domesticity ceased to be a problem; and you may set him down for good and all as fortunate in his marriage. But to suggest all that his marriage meant for him I must return to the child Tom Archer. The extraordinary companionship which Archer found in his little son could not have existed but for a double bond between them. First, Archer had retained much more of his own childhood than even his most intimate friends suspected. He must have been a very imaginative child; and he had retained so much of a child's imagination and fun that it was for some time a puzzle to me that he could be so completely fascinated as he was by Ibsen's imagination, and that yet, when I produced my Quintessence of Ibsenism, he dismissed much of the specifically adult and worldly part of it precisely as he had dismissed the Scriptural exegetics of his grandfather. This devoted Ibsenite, who translated the Master's works so forcibly and vividly, was never in the least an Ibsenist: he delighted in Ibsen's plays just as a child delights in The Arabian Nights without taking in anything of the passages which Captain Burton left unexpurgated. It was this innocence that limited his own excursions into dramatic literature: he could not see that the life around him, including his own, was teeming with dramatic material, and persisted in looking for his subjects either in literature or in fairyland.

Now it happened that Tom Archer, though so entirely his mother's son in most respects that, save for an occasional fleeting revelation in his expression, he was not a bit

like Archer, had a prodigious imagination. Having no derisive brothers and sisters to make him sensitive and secretive about it, but, on the contrary, a father who took it with the tenderest seriousness, and in fact became an accomplice in all its extravagances, Tom was able to let himself go gloriously. He invented a *pays de Cocagne* which he called Peona, which went far beyond the garret-forest in The Wild Duck, as it had no contact with limited mechanical realities. I heard much of Peona and its inhabitants at second hand, and even a little at first hand, on which occasions I swallowed every adventure with a gravity not surpassed by Archer's own. I am sure that Archer, whose youth as one of a large and robust family enjoyed no such protection, could never have felt this delicacy had he not remembered his own youth, and recognized his own imagination in his son's.

There was another experience from which he was determined to protect Tom; and that was the British boarding school, or boy farm, as William Morris called it. It was useless to romance to him about the character forming virtues and historic glories of Eton and Harrow, Winchester and Rugby and Marlborough: he anticipated the opinions of Sanderson of Oundle, who heartily agreed with me when I expressed my opinion that these places should be razed to the ground, and their foundations sown with salt. Archer had taken his own schooling as a dayboy, and was convinced, with good reason, that this arrangement, however inconvenient for the parents, was much more wholesome for the child. Accordingly, Tom spent his childish schooldays with his people in a Surrey cottage on the façade of which Mr. Edward Rimbault Dibdin inscribed the name Walden (a compliment to Thoreau) in highly artistic lettering. When he outgrew the educational resources of that primitive neighborhood the family moved to Dulwich and sent him to the college there.

Meanwhile my comment on Tom was that he was a second Rudyard Kipling; for, as I happened to know from William Morris, Mr. Kipling had been a great Peoneer in his nonage.

The years in which Archer and Tom explored Peona together passed as fast as real years in a real country until at last the once inexhaustible subject of Tom dropped so completely that I actually had to ask Archer about him. To my amazement he conveyed to me, with a manner that would have done credit to a piece of mahogany, that the firm of Archer & Son of Peona had dissolved partnership. Tom, he explained, had been ill; and Archer opined that the illness had affected his character, which, he said, was totally changed. This theory of the alleged change was too summary and too surgical to convince me. But I forbore to probe; and the truth came out gradually. The child Tom, developing into the incipient man, emerged from Peona a most unnatural son. He was as keen about the glories of public schools as if he were indeed the author of Stalky and Co. He distinguished himself at Dulwich by the facility with which he turned out Latin verses, becoming Captain of the Classical Side. He joined the Officers' Training Corps, and actually made his father enlist in the Inns of Court Volunteers, a trial which Archer supported because, being a private, and having to salute Tom, who was an officer, the situation appealed to his sense of humor as well as to his conscientious public spirit. In short, he dragged Archer out of Peona with him, and imposed public schools ideals on him. Military romance alone survived from fairyland; and even that took the fashionable imperialist shape.

Up to this time Archer had, without knowing it, been a true Glasite in the essential sense. His kingdom had not been of this world. But now, what with the son grasping with all his imaginative power at conventional military ideals, and this world beginning to treat the father with more and more of the distinguished consideration which his work earned and his unworldly character commanded, Archer had to adapt himself as far as he could to the responsibilities of his celebrity, and to set himself to make the best of convention instead of criticizing it with the independence of a young and comparatively unknown man. Every free lance who makes a reputation has to go through this phase;

but Archer was under the special emotional pressure of having to adapt himself to Tom's Kiplingesque war mentality in and out of season. He became as conventional as it was in his nature to be, and indeed, for Tom's sake, perhaps a little more, though the public school had taken away his playmate.

Presently Tom's boyhood passed like his childhood, and left him a young man, still his mother's son in respect of being under average military size and considerably over average military vigor of mind and practical initiative. Oxford, where he was expected to distinguish himself because he had done so at Dulwich, did not suit him. True, his aptitude for classical exercises did not desert him. He took honors in law, and was in no sense a failure. But Oxford was something of a failure for him. The struggle for life was not real enough there for a youth who had a passion for the military realism of soldiering. When he left Oxford to begin adult life, he worked as a solicitor for a couple of years in London. Then an opening in America, with a promise of a speedy return to rejoin his family at home, took him across the Atlantic.

Two months later the gulf of war opened at the feet of our young men. Tom rushed back to hurl himself into it. Amid the volcanoes of Messines he was serving as a lance-corporal in "the dear old G Company" of the London Scottish. Invalided home, he accepted a commission, and for a year was able to do no more than sit on the brink of the gulf in the Ordnance until his strength returned, when he volunteered afresh for the firing line as lieutenant in the King's Own Scottish Borderers. In February, 1918, he married Alys Morty, cousin to a comrade-at-arms fallen at Messines, and had a deliriously happy honeymoon in Ireland. Then, the war still dragging on, he hurled himself into the gulf again; and this time, at Mount Kemmel, it closed on him, and his father saw him no more. He left his young widow to take his place in his parents' affections, the newly found beloved daughter succeeding to the newly lost beloved son. Yet Archer was loth to let the son go.

He renewed an old interest in super-rational research; investigated dreams and the new psycho-analysis; and even experimented unsuccessfully in those posthumous conversations in which so many of the bereaved found comfort. And so, between daughter and son, the adventure of parentage never ended for Archer.

When the war broke out he was past military age, and had to confine his part in it to countering the German propaganda service and doing some of our own, an employment in which his knowledge of languages stood him in good stead. When the Armistice made an end of that, his own bent reasserted itself and took him back to the theatre, and (save where his memories of Tom were concerned) to militant Rationalism.

His great work of translating Ibsen had by this time been brought to an end by Ibsen's death. I am myself a much translated author; and I know how hard the lot of a translator is if he is sensitive to frantic abuse both by rival or would-be rival translators, and by literary men inflamed by an enthusiasm for the author (gained from the translations they abuse) which convinces them that his opinions are their own, and that the translator, not seeing this, has missed the whole point of the work. I use the word frantic advisedly: the lengths to which these attacks go are incredible. At one time it was the fashion in the literary cliques to dismiss Archer's translations as impossible. I told them it was no use: that Archer-Ibsen had seized the public imagination as it had seized theirs, and would beat any other brand of Ibsen in English. And it was so. Whenever a translation was produced without the peculiar character that Archer gave to his, it had no character at all, no challenge, at best only a drawingroom elegance that was a drawback rather than an advantage. When Mr. Anstey burlesqued Ibsen in Punch, he did it by burlesquing Archer: without Archer the plays would not have bitten deep enough to be burlesqued. Even in the case of Peer Gynt, which moved several enthusiasts to attempt translations following the rhymes and metres of

the original (I began one myself, with our friend Braekstad translating for me literally, line by line, and got as far as a couple of pages or so), the unrhymed translation by Archer and his brother Colonel Charles Archer held its own against the most ingenious and elaborate rival versions. Whenever Peer Gynt was quoted it was always in the Archer version. I have already given the explanation. Archer understood and cared for Ibsen's imagination. For his sociological views he cared so little that he regarded them mostly as aberrations when he was conscious of them. Thus, undistracted by Ibsen's discussions, he went straight for his poetry, and reproduced every stroke of imagination in a phraseology that invented itself *ad hoc* in his hands. As nothing else really mattered, the critics who could not see this, and would have it that everything else mattered, neither made nor deserved to make any permanent impression. Besides, the air of Norway breathed through his versions. He had breathed it himself from his childhood during his frequent visits, beginning at the age of three, to the Norwegian home of his grandparents, where he had two unmarried aunts who exercised his tenderness and powers of admiration very beneficently. As to the few lyrics which occur in Ibsen's plays, and which would have baffled a prosaic translator, they gave Archer no trouble at all: he was at his best in them. If it had been possible for the father of a family to live by writing verse in the nineteenth century, Archer would probably have done more in that manner on his own account.

How far he sacrificed a career as an original playwright to putting the English speaking peoples in possession of Ibsen is an open question. In my opinion he instinctively chose the better part, because the theatre was not to him a workshop but part of his fairyland. He never really got behind the scenes, and never wanted to. The illusion that had charmed his youth was so strong and lasting that not even fifty years of professional theatre going in London could dispel it. Inevitably then he liked the theatre as he found it at first: the theatre of the French "well made

play." But the attraction of this school of theatrical art for him did not lie in its ingenuities and neatnesses of construction, though he sometimes wrote as if it did. He liked it because it also lived in fairyland. Sophisticated as it was, yet was its kingdom not of this world. Archer, though he approached it as a reformer, did not want to reform it out of existence: he wanted to strengthen it by giving some sort of subsistence to its make-believe, which had worn thin and stale, ignorant and incredible. He did not want to drag the heroine from her fairyland; but how could he believe in her if she had an obviously impossible solicitor and butler and lady's maid? If she lived in a world totally exhausted of ideas, created by authors who, outside their little theatrical clique, knew nothing of their country, and conceived it as a complete vacuum in respect of the things it had most at heart, business, sport, politics, and religion, how could a man of any strength of mind or sense of verisimilitude take her seriously? That was why Archer cried out in one breath for naturalness in the theatre and for artifice in dramatic authorship. In the novel, which raises no question of technique, he welcomed the most uncompromising naturalness, making me read De Maupassant's Une Vie, applauding Zola, and coming into my rooms one day full of his discovery of a new novelist of our own, who had burst on the world with a naturalistic novel entitled A Mummer's Wife. I was so impressed with his account of it that I eagerly asked the name of the author; but when he told me it was George Moore I burst into irreverent laughter, knowing the said George personally as an inveterate romancer, whose crimson inventions, so far delivered orally for private circulation only, suggested that he had been brought into the world by a union of Victor Hugo with Ouida. But Archer insisted on my reading the book, as he had insisted on my reading Une Vie; and I stood rebuked for my incredulity.

I never read Archer's one novel, a youthful exploit called The Doom of the Destroyed, which had been published serially in a Scottish newspaper, and was one of his favorite

jokes. I gathered that in point of romance it left George Moore's unpublished *quasi* autobiographical tales of adventure nowhere; but it is certain that Archer's adult taste in novels was for merciless realism. Therefore when one day he proposed that we two should collaborate in writing a play, he to supply the constructional scaffolding or scenario, and I to fill in the dialogue, I assumed that I might be as realistic as Zola or De Maupassant with his entire sympathy. But he was always upsetting my assumptions as to his sympathies; and he did so signally on this occasion.

It happened in this way. Archer had planned for two heroines, a rich one and a poor one. The hero was to prefer the poor one to the rich one; and in the end his disinterestedness was to be rewarded by the lucrative discovery that the poor one was really the rich one. When I came to fill in this scheme I compressed the two heroines into one; but I made up the one out of two models, whom I will now describe.

Once, when I was walking homewards at midnight through Wigmore St., taking advantage of its stillness and loneliness at that hour to contemplate, like Kant, the starry heaven above me, the solitude was harshly broken by the voices of two young women who came out of Mandeville Place on the other side of the street a couple of hundred yards behind me. The dominant one of the pair was in a black rage: the other was feebly trying to quiet her. The strained strong voice and the whimpering remonstrant one went on for some time. Then came the explosion. The angry one fell on the other, buffeting her, tearing at her hair, grasping at her neck. The victim, evidently used to it, cowered against the railings, covering herself as best she could, and imploring and remonstrating in a carefully subdued tone, dreading a police rescue more than the other's violence. Presently the fit passed, and the two came on their way, the lioness silent, and the lamb reproachful and rather emboldened by her sense of injury. The scene stuck in my memory, to be used in due time.

Also I had about this time a friendship with a young independent professional woman, who enjoyed, as such,

an exceptional freedom of social intercourse in artistic circles in London. As she was clever, goodnatured, and very goodlooking, all her men friends fell in love with her. This had occurred so often that she had lost all patience with the hesitating preliminaries of her less practised adorers. Accordingly, when they clearly longed to kiss her, and she did not dislike them sufficiently to make their gratification too great a strain on her excessive goodnature, she would seize the stammering suitor firmly by the wrists, bring him into her arms by a smart pull, and saying "Let's get it over," allow the startled gentleman to have his kiss, and then proceed to converse with him at her ease on subjects of more general interest.

I provided Archer with a heroine by inventing a young woman who developed from my obliging but impatient friend in the first act to the fury of Wigmore Street in the second: such a heroine as had not been seen on the London stage since Shakespear's Taming of the Shrew. And my shrew was never tamed.

Now Archer was not such a simpleton as to be unaware that some women are vulgar, violent, and immodest according to Victorian conceptions of modesty. He would probably have assented to the proposition that as vulgarity, violence, and immodesty are elements in human nature, it is absurd to think of them as unwomanly, unmanly, or unnatural. Yet he also knew that a character practically free from these three vices could be put on the stage without any departure from nature, for the excellent reason that his own character was most unusually free from them, even his strong Scottish sense of humor being, like his conversation, entirely clean. He reproached me for my apparent obsession with abominably illtempered characters, oversexed to saturation. My way in the theatre was evidently not his way; and it was not until, at my third attempt as a playwright, I achieved a play (Mrs. Warren's Profession) which appealed to his sense of Zolaistic naturalism, that he ceased to dissuade me from pursuing the occupation into which he had innocently tempted me.

I must mention that his decisive and indignant retirement from the collaboration occurred whilst the play was still in shorthand, and therefore quite illegible by him, and not legible enough by myself to admit of my reading it aloud to him tolerably. It was my deliberate and unconscionable disregard of the rules of the art of play construction that revolted him. His scenario had been communicated to me *viva voce;* and when I told him I had finished the first act, and had not yet come to his plot, asking him to refresh my memory about it, he felt as the architect of a cathedral might if the builder had remarked one day that he had finished the nave and transepts according to his own fancy, and, having lost the architect's plans, would like to have another copy of them before he tackled the tower, the choir, and the lady chapel. I managed to appease my architect by arguing that it was not until the second act that a well made play came to business seriously, and that meanwhile I had fulfilled his design by making the river Rhine the scene of the meeting of the lovers in the first act. But when, having written some pages of the second act, I said I had used up all his plot and wanted some more to go on with, he retired peremptorily from the firm. He was of course quite right: I was transmogrifying not only his design but the whole British drama of that day so recklessly that my privilege as a paradoxical lunatic broke down under the strain; and he could no longer with any self-respect allow me to play the fool with his scenario. For it was not a question of this particular scenario only. He did not agree with me that the form of drama which had been perfected in the middle of the nineteenth century in the French theatre was essentially mechanistic and therefore incapable of producing vital drama. That it was exhausted and, for the moment, sterile, was too obvious to escape an observer of his intelligence; but he saw nothing fundamentally wrong with it, and to the end of his life maintained that it was indispensable as a form for sound theatrical work, needing only to be brought into contact with life by having new ideas poured into it. I held, on the contrary,

that a play is a vital growth and not a mechanical construction; that a plot is the ruin of a story and therefore of a play, which is essentially a story; that Shakespear's plays and Dickens's novels, though redeemed by their authors's genius, were as ridiculous in their plots as Goldsmith's hopelessly spoilt Goodnatured Man: in short, that a play should never have a plot, because, if it has any natural life in it, it will construct itself, like a flowering plant, far more wonderfully than its author can consciously construct it.

On such terms collaboration between us was impossible: indeed my view practically excludes collaboration. His view does not; and we shall presently see him returning to it after an interval of many years, during which I had become an established playwright, possibly wrong in my theory, but beyond all question successful in my practice.

He had already written plays singlehanded. I remember a one-act play called Clive, dealing with the failure of that hero's attempt at suicide, and his conclusion that Heaven had other views for him. As this has disappeared, he may have destroyed it as puerile; but I thought it promising, and more alive than a play about a prima donna who lost her voice, a theme frankly taken from George Eliot's Armgart. George Eliot's reputation was then enormous, in spite of the protests of Ruskin, and of the alliterative vituperations of Swinburne; and it was very far from being undeserved. When I read Middlemarch in my teens I was impressed by it as by a masterpiece of a new order; and I have no doubt that Archer was equally impressed, though I do not remember discussing George Eliot with him. But the impression she made was not encouraging. The effect of the fatalistic determinism into which the scientific thought of that day had driven her was distinctly depressing and laming. Her characters seemed the helpless victims of their environment and inherited dispositions, contributing nothing except a few follies and weaknesses to the evolutionary struggle, if the word struggle can be used where there is no real resistance to what Darwin called natural

selection. Now a fatalist, as George Eliot proved, can write so well that a capable man of letters like the late Lord Bryce, in a public eulogy of Tolstoy, could think of nothing more complimentary to say of him than that as a novelist he was second only to George Eliot. But, for all that, she discouraged many noble spirits; and I think she disabled Archer to some extent, directly or indirectly. The last drop of dramatic vitality in her school was drained by Ibsen; and when Archer had translated Ibsen there was nothing left for the translator.

Archer had various theories as to this disablement: as, for instance, that he could not write dialogue, which was nonsense; but the fact was that a George Eloitish philosophy of life, and a mechanistic limitation of the possibilities of the theatre, combined with his natural and very amiable diffidence and his unconsciously Glasite unworldliness, kept him back from the newly broken and rather unsightly ground in which alone a new drama could germinate.

At last, quite late in life, he had a dream; and the dream was a good story about an Indian Rajah made cynical by a western education, and a Green Goddess who had to be propitiated by blood sacrifices, some English captives becoming available for that purpose. The result proved that the complexes which inhibited him from writing effective plays when he was awake, did not operate when he was asleep. When he turned his dream into a play it was prodigiously successful, first in America and then in England; and Archer ceased at last to be a much underpaid man. I had urged at every opportunity that the great national services he had done by his Englishing of Ibsen should be acknowledged by a pension (a title without one is only a source of expense); but I was always met with the difficulty that in this Philistine country parliamentary grants are made only to generals, pro-consuls, and Polar explorers. Literature and art have nothing to look for but an occasional knighthood or a civil list pension; and to obtain the pension it is necessary to assert that the postulant is in straitened circumstances. For Ashton Ellis, the translator of Richard

Wagner's voluminous prose works, it had been possible, when he was almost destitute, to obtain a wretched pittance of £80 a year; but Archer was at no time at a loss for his livelihood. After the success of The Green Goddess a pension was more than ever out of the question; and Archer never had any official recognition of his public service, out of which, by the way, he steadfastly refused to make money through translator's performing fees, lest he should compromise his disinterestedness as a critic.

Here let me say, parenthetically, that Archer was incorruptible as a critic. In his day there were two methods of amiable corruption in vogue. One was called simply Chicken & Champagne, which explains itself. It includes various degrees of blandishment; and some of them were tried on Archer; but they were hopelessly thrown away on him, because he never had the least suspicion of their nature, and either accepted them in unconquerable innocence at their face value, or declined them because they bored him. The second method was almost a routine. An actor-manager would write to a critic to say that he wanted to consult him as an expert. An interview would follow. The manager would explain that he had acquired the performing right of some foreign play, and was thinking of attempting a part in it. Would the critic advise him about the translation? Would he care to undertake the translation? If so, would he sell a six months option on the translation for, say, £50? If the critic was amenable, the £50 changed hands; and nothing more was heard of the play or the translation. If not, he recommended another translator; the manager shrugged his shoulders; and the two parted smiling. The managers did this, I believe, rather because it was the fashion, and almost the due of a leading critic, than with any sense that the proposal was in any way improper. Certainly the three late distinguished actor-managers who made it to me when I was a critic thought no worse of it than of tipping a waiter, and probably considered it rather unsocial on my part to evade the transaction.

Notwithstanding Archer's reputation as a translator, no such proposals were made, as far as I know, to him. His integrity was unassailed because it was so obviously impregnable. I doubt if he even knew the game as a usage, though he must have been aware of instances in which dealings in options had been followed by marked accesses of eulogy. After all, the instances were exceptional; besides, he went his own way so completely as a matter of course that he passed through the theatrical world without noticing all its aberrations, as indeed he passed through the kingdom of this world in general. He was much too scrupulous in the matter of the Ibsen translations; but the position of a critic who is also a proprietor of performing rights of any kind is certainly a very delicate one; and it was characteristic of Archer to carry his delicacy too far rather than accept a commercial interest in the plays of an author whom his critical conscience obliged him to recommend with all his might.

Diffident to the last, Archer had no sooner constructed The Green Goddess according to rule, and finished the two main acts, than he lost self-confidence, and perhaps patience, over the dénouement in the third act, and asked me to finish the play for him on the old ground that he could not write dialogue. I overwhelmed him with denunciations of his laziness; told him he could finish it perfectly well for himself if he chose to; and threatened that if I did the work I would make the lady get the better of the wicked Rajah in the vein of Captain Brassbound's Conversion. This threat was effectual; and he turned to Arthur Pinero to finish the play for him. Pinero, with great tact, made an alternative suggestion which opened Archer's eyes to the fact that if it was not worth his while to write the last act because it was to be hack work, he should offer it to a hack writer. Archer thereupon finished the play himself, and was, I hope, delivered by the result from all further misgivings as to his own competence. But it was too late in the day to begin life anew as a fashionable playwright; and The Green Goddess stands, by no means

as the crown of his career, but rather as a proof that the inhibitions which prevented him from achieving this sort of worldly success earlier were not due, as he himself feared, to lack of faculty, but to Providence, which had other fish for him to fry.

In his predestined work I do not include the whole of his huge output of notices of theatrical performances, nor even the plans for a national theatre, which he prepared in collaboration with Harley Granville-Barker, then the most wonderful of the younger generation knocking at our doors. Journalistic criticism, after the first years, becomes necessarily for the most part repetitive bread winning; and the theatre planning was rather like building sand castles in the face of a flood tide, a pastime to which Granville-Barker was much addicted as a refuge from his proper business of writing plays. Archer's essays on the censorship, on Diderot's Paradox (Masks or Faces?), and on Macready, with his reprints of the theatrical criticisms of Lewes and Forster, are all valuable and readable; but they lay in his path as a professional critic of the theatre, and are therefore not so significant as the excursions to which his spirit drove him.

In 1906 a Spanish educationalist and philanthropist who was also strongly anti-clerical (meaning really anti-obscurantist), and was therefore supposed by the officers of the Spanish army to be in his nature essentially diabolical, and in his habits an assassin of all royal persons, had the misfortune to fall into the hands of a court martial in Barcelona, where he was shamefully illused whilst in custody, and finally shot. It was a monstrous case of class ignorance and vindictive bigotry; and Archer willingly accepted a journalistic commission to visit Spain and investigate it. He exposed it so effectually that the biographical dictionaries and encyclopædias now refer to him as their authority for their accounts of the martyrdom—for that is what it came to—of Ferrer.

His subsequent visit to India, though it had no such sensational provocation, produced his remarkable book on

the subject. At that time it was the fashion for literary European travellers returning from Asia to display their susceptibilities to the call of the East by depicting an India of boundless and magical fascination, lit up with Bengal lights, saturated with the charm of Pierre Loti's romances, adorned with the temples of a living religion more profound than our own, and inhabited by Rabindranath Tagores and dark eyed enchantresses, with Mahatmas in the mountain background. These enthusiasts were more Indian than any Indian; and their readers, who had never been in India, began where they left off, and went much further into an imaginary east. Archer went to see for himself, and instantly and uncompromisingly denounced the temples as the shambles of a barbarous ritual of blood sacrifice, and the people as idolaters with repulsive rings through their noses. He refused to accept the interest of Indian art and the fictions of Indian romance as excuses. He remained invincibly faithful to Western civilization, and told the Indians flatly what a civilized western gentleman must think of them and feel about some of their customs.

In doing so he did India the only service in his power. If western civilization is not more enlightened than eastern we have clearly no right to be in India. When once the British conqueror and master of India comes to think that suttee is a touching and beautiful act of wifely sacrifice, he had better abdicate, come home, and introduce suttee in England. When he ceases to treat the car of Juggernaut precisely as he would treat a motor bus driven to the public danger, his mission in India is over. What we owe to the Roman occupation of Britain we do not know: in fact there is too much ground for Mr. George Trevelyan's conclusion that we relapsed the moment the Romans left us to ourselves; but we should certainly owe nothing at all if the Romans had had the slightest doubt that the augur represented a less grossly superstitious religion than the Druid, and that Roman law and Roman civilization were higher than British. They may have been as hasty and superficial as Sir John Woodroffe declares Archer to have

been; but they did not think so; and anyhow the sole justification of their conquest and occupation was that they were right. We shall have to clear out of India some day as the Romans had to clear out of Britain: perhaps the sooner the better for both parties. But it is certain that if, after that happens, the Indians are ever to say "It was a good thing for us that the westerners came and taught us something," it will be because the English criticism of India was Archer's criticism, and not that of the occidental renegades who swell the heads of our Indian students by assuring them that we are crude barbarians compared to them. Archer would have been the last man to deny that we are shocking barbarians according to our own standards; that white women with small earrings cannot logically despise brown women with large noserings; and that the Fundamentalist who prosecutes a school teacher for refusing to bow the knee to the god to whom Jephtha sacrificed his daughter can hardly hope to impose himself on an educated Hindu as a pioneer of thought. All the same, the Fundamentalist does not sacrifice his daughter or even his calf, and would send anyone who did to the electric chair or the lunatic asylum; and the eastern toleration of noserings is not justified by the western toleration of earrings. People who make the one an excuse for the other will never do anything to lighten the load of human superstition; and as this was really Archer's appointed task in life he wrote one of the most useful, because one of the most resolutely unsympathetic, books on India produced in his generation. It is not all unsympathetic or anti-Indian: very far from it. But it was the unsympathetic part that was needed and effective. If you like, he wrote about the Indians as John Glas would have written about the heathen. But why not rather put it that he wrote about the Indians as Dickens wrote about the Americans? And does anyone now doubt that Dickens told the Americans what they needed to be told, and that his honesty did not prevent his becoming more popular with them than any of their romantic flatterers?

I have no more to say about William Archer that matters enough to be printed. Looking back as far as the days when, finding me full of literary ability but ridiculously incapable of obtaining literary employment and desperately in need of it, he set me on my feet as a critical journalist by simply handing me over a share of his own work, and making excuses for having deputed it until the Pall Mall Gazette and The World, then in the van of fashionable journalism, accepted the deputy as a principal, I am conscious that many of our contemporaries must have seen him much oftener than I, and that this sketch of him must be incomplete and perhaps in some points misleading. And there is the other possibility: that I may have been too close to him, and known him too early, to realize his full stature. But I am sure that I never could get him to think as well of himself as I thought of him. I leave it to others to compose a proper full-dress literary portrait of him: all I have tried to do here is to give some sort of life to a sketch of a friend of whom, after more than forty years, I have not a single unpleasant recollection, and whom I was never sorry to see or unready to talk to.

One day I received from him the following letter:

27, Fitzroy Square, W. 1.
17*th December*, 1924.

My dear G. B. S.

Since I wrote you, I have learnt that I shall have to undergo an operation one of these days—I go into a nursing home tomorrow. I don't know that the operation is a very serious one, and as a matter of fact I feel as fit as a fiddle, so I suppose my chances are pretty good. Still, accidents will happen; and this episode gives me an excuse for saying, what I hope you don't doubt—namely, that though I may sometimes have played the part of all-too candid mentor, I have never wavered in my admiration and affection for you, or ceased to feel that the Fates had treated me kindly in making me your contemporary and friend. I thank

you from my heart for forty years of good comradeship.

Whatever happens, let it never be said that I did not move in good society—I lunched today with the King of Norway and Prince Olaf.

Very kind regards to Mrs. Shaw, and all good wishes for 1925.—Ever yours, W. A.

I was not seriously alarmed, and presently sailed for Madeira. On landing there, the first words that caught my eye on the news bulletin in the hall of Reid's Hotel were "Death of Mr. William Archer." They threw me into a transport of fury. The operation had killed him. I am unfashionable enough to hold that an operation which does not justify itself by its promised results should always be the subject of a stringent inquest; for I have never been able to regard a death caused by an operation as a natural death. My rage may have been unjust to the surgeons; but it carried me over my first sense of bereavement. When I returned to an Archerless London it seemed to me that the place had entered on a new age in which I was lagging superfluous.

I still feel that when he went he took a piece of me with him. G. B. S.

Ayot St. Lawrence
July 1926.

MARTHA WASHINGTON

A Play in Eight Scenes

SCENES AND PERSONAGES

All characters historical except those marked with an asterisk

SCENE FIRST

The White House, York River, Virginia,
January 6, 1759.

Colonel George Washington.
Thomas, Lord Fairfax.
Governor Fauquier.
Major Chamberlayne.
Mr. William Dandridge.
Mr. Bartholomew Dandridge.
Mr. John Augustine Washington.
Mr. Charles Washington.
Cully (*a Negro*).

Mrs. Martha Custis.
Mrs. Dandridge.
Miss Elizabeth Dandridge.
Mrs. Fielding Lewis (Betty Washington).
Mrs. Burwell Bassett (Fanny Dandridge).

A Clergyman, Guests, Negroes, etc.

SCENE SECOND

Mount Vernon, August 31, 1774.

Colonel Washington.
Colonel Edmund Pendleton.
Mr. Patrick Henry.
Cully (*a Negro*).

Mrs. Washington.

SCENE THIRD

Mount Vèrnon, June 21, 1775.

Mr. John Parke Custis.
Mr. Fielding Lewis.
Cully (*a Negro*).

Mrs. Washington.
Mrs. Eleanor Custis.
Mrs. Fielding Lewis.

SCENE FOURTH

The Vassall House, Cambridge, Mass.

Part I.—March 16, 1776.

Mr. John Parke Custis.

Mrs. Washington.
Mrs. Eleanor Custis.
Mrs. Knox.
Mrs. Mifflin.
* Mrs. Hallowell.
* Sally.

Part II.—March 17, 1776.

General Washington.
An Aide-de-camp.

Mrs. Washington.
* Sally.

SCENE FIFTH

The Camp at Valley Forge

Part I.—February 11, 1778.

Dr. Albigence Waldo.
* Sergeant Magrath.

* Privates Stone, Hollingsworth, Dunphy, Nicols, Phibbs, Hart.
A Negro Servant.

Mrs. Washington.

Part II.—May 5, 1778.

General Washington.
General Benedict Arnold.
Generals Greene, Lincoln, Stirling, Wayne.
A Lieutenant.
A Spy.

Mrs. Washington.
Mrs. Greene, Lady Stirling, Mrs. Knox.

Officers, Soldiers, Ladies.

SCENE SIXTH

Mount Vernon, October 7, 1780.

John Parke Custis.
Cully (*a Negro*).

Mrs. Washington.
Mrs. Eleanor Custis.
Elizabeth *and* Martha Custis (*Children*).
* Chloe (*a Negress*).

SCENE SEVENTH

The Bassett House, Eltham, Virginia,
November 5, 1781.

General Washington.
John Parke Custis.
Dr. Craik.

Mrs. Washington.
Mrs. Eleanor Custis.
Mrs. Burwell Bassett.

SCENE EIGHTH

Mount Vernon, December 2, 1799.

Ex-President Washington.
Bryan, Lord Fairfax.

Mrs. Washington.
Lady Fairfax.
Miss Julia Fairfax.

SCENE FIRST

The Sixth of January, 1759. Both G. W. and M. W. are aged twenty-seven—a few months more or less.

At the White House, one of the Custis residences, on the York River, Virginia.

A well-proportioned and spacious room, very simply decorated, in light colours. (Walls panelled and painted.) Entrance door L. *In back wall a large double door opening into a similar, but smaller room. This door is not opened until the end of the scene. In wall* R. *two sash windows, high and comparatively narrow, with fire-place between them—logs burning on hearth. Rather wooden portrait of ancestor in British uniform of the Marlborough period over mantelpiece. One or two other crude family portraits on wall. The windows look out upon a wintry garden. Simple chandelier with about a dozen candles in centre of ceiling, and scones for candles on walls. But the whole scene passes in bright morning light.*

All the chairs, sofas and settees of the room, with others evidently pressed into the service, are ranged in four or five rows, facing towards the back. The rows, however, are broken by an aisle leading up to the double door, and about the width of the door. There are eight seats in each row, four on each side of the aisle. The chairs of the last row, near the fire-place, are light and can easily be turned so as to face the fire.

(Note.—The White House no longer exists, so that the motives for this scene may be taken from any good colonial building.)

CULLY, *a middle-aged negro butler in livery, enters* L., *and is immediately aware of various negro faces, male and female, at both windows. He crosses the room with menacing gestures, throws up the window, down* R. *and speaks.*

CULLY. Now yo' po' black trash, jes' yo' clar right 'way. Yo' think yo' Mistiss caynt be jined in holy matermony 'thout yo' rubbin' yo' ugly noses up 'gin her winder-panes. What dat yo' say, Dinah? Want ter see her weddin' gown? Oh yo' female wimmin—plum crazy on puss'nal 'dornment! Well, yo' niggers has ma permish'n ter gad'er roun' de peaszer when the bride an' bridegroom dey comes out fer ter drive away. A 'clar ter grashus A dasn't do no more fer yer dan dat. Be off wid yer, now! Git 'way down ter de Williamsburg gate, an' cheer fer Cun'l Washington when he 'rive. A's info'med his Hon'ble Exency de Gub'nor am gwine ter 'scort him. But yo' hymn-singers yo' jes' keep on hand. A'll wave ma hankchif when de cermony begin fer ter commence, an' den's yo' time fer ter mek a joyful noise before de Lo'd. Keep yo eyes on dis yer winder, yo' unnerstan'? Well den, hol' yer breffs an' act accordin'. (*Closes the window with a bang.*)

At this moment ELIZABETH DANDRIDGE, *aged ten, but looking younger, runs in* L. *She is* MARTHA'S *half-sister—a pretty child, wearing a little hoop and a white satin gown with pink ribbons. Perhaps her hair might be done up and powdered. Pictures of children of the period should be consulted.*

ELIZABETH (*carrying a white silk favour*). Oh, Cully, I've got a favour for you. Come here and I'll pin it on. (*Does so.*)

CULLY. Bless yo' heart, Missy Lizbeth.

ELIZABETH (*holding out her skirts and turning round*). What do you think of my gown, Cully?

CULLY. A 'clar ter goodness, yo' looks splendenshus, Missy Lizbeth. Yo' mout be de bride yo'self.

ELIZABETH. No, Cully, since Colonel George is marrying my sister, I don't think I shall ever marry. (*Sighing*) I could give my heart to no one else.

CULLY. Dere now, Missy—cheer up!

ELIZABETH (*does so*). Of course I'm very glad to have him for a brother-in-law. I was quite a child when my other brother-in-law died; but I don't believe he can have been half as amiable as Colonel George.

CULLY. Ole Mas'r Custis he wuz a fine man, Missy; but A's 'bleedzed fer ter say A's 'quainted wid no gem'man dat can hol' a can'l ter Cun'l Washington.

ELIZABETH. Do you know what my teacher says he is, Cully? She says he's a hero!

CULLY. Bless grashus, wha's dat, Missy?

ELIZABETH. I don't know exactly, but I think a hero means some one that's very tall and strong and kind.

CULLY. Even ter his niggers, Missy?

ELIZABETH (*quite simply*). Yes, even to his niggers.

CULLY. Den I hopes yo' schoolmarm done tell de troof.

ELIZABETH (*looking round the room*). But, Cully, if the company are to sit in these chairs, I don't see any place for the bride and bridegroom and the minister.

CULLY. Bless yo' heart, Missy, de altar am in dar. (*Indicating the double door.*) When de time come, we opens dese yer do's——

ELIZABETH (*running up to the double door, slightly opening it, and peeping*). Oh, Cully, how beautiful! Where did all these flowers come from?

CULLY. De Lor' Fairfax, he sen' 'um f'um up de river.

ELIZABETH. Oh, isn't a wedding fun, Cully! Shan't I have a lot to tell my little nephew and niece.

CULLY (*surprised*). Yo' nephew, Missy?

ELIZABETH (*grandly*). Master John and Miss Patsy, of course.

CULLY. Dere now, ef A didn't disremember! Sho' nuff dey's yo' nephew and niece, Missy Lizbeth.

ELIZABETH. Poor innocents, they cried when their mother left them at the Six-Chimney House. But they would only have been in the way here, and children quickly get over their little troubles.

CULLY (*open-mouthed*). Well, A 'clar ter goodness!

ELIZABETH. What do you mean, Cully?

CULLY. Nothin', Missy Lizbeth—nuthin' in de roun' worril!

Enter L. MRS. DANDRIDGE *and* MRS. FIELDING LEWIS, *both in gala attire.* MRS. DANDRIDGE, *a substantial lady of forty-five, is* ELIZABETH'S *mother and* MARTHA'S *stepmother.* MRS. LEWIS, WASHINGTON'S *sister* BETTY, *is about twenty-six.*

MRS. DANDRIDGE. Well, is everything ready, Cully?

CULLY. All am prepar'd, Ma'am.

ELIZABETH. Oh, mother, the altar is just lovely! Do look!

MRS. DANDRIDGE. I arranged the flowers myself, my dear. (*Looking at a huge watch, attached to a long gold chain.*) A quarter of twelve! I hear your brother is famed for his punctuality.

MRS. LEWIS. 'Tis a military virtue, Madam.

MRS. DANDRIDGE. Elizabeth, run to your sister Martha's room, and tell her there are only fifteen minutes left. Your sister Fanny is helping her to complete her toilet.

ELIZABETH. Yes, mother. [*Runs out* L.

MRS. DANDRIDGE. Cully, set chairs by the fire. (CULLY *does so, taking the two nearest chairs in the back row.*) We may as well wait in comfort, Mrs. Lewis. The company will soon be here now, Cully. Be on the watch for them.

CULLY. Sho'ly A will, Marm.

Exit L. *The two ladies sit by the fire.*

MRS. DANDRIDGE. Well, now dear Mrs. Lewis, I hope you take kindly to your new sister-in-law.

MRS. LEWIS. Indeed I do, Madam. I think my brother a most fortunate man.

MRS. DANDRIDGE. Strange how the tall men always pick out the little women. Perhaps Providence so orders it, lest the race should run into giants at the one end and dwarfs at the other.

MRS. LEWIS. But though Martha is no Amazon, she has presence—she has air.

MRS. DANDRIDGE. She has character, dear Madam. Your brother will find her staunch and sterling. Poor Daniel Custis was a good husband enough, yet not quite good enough for her.

MRS. LEWIS. We are all rejoiced that George has at last chosen so wisely. He is by no means insensible to feminine attractions, and has hovered on the brink of matrimony more than once.

MRS. DANDRIDGE. I have heard some gossip about him and a Miss Fauntleroy——

MRS. LEWIS. Yes—and then I believe there was a certain Miss Phillipse of New York with whom he was mightily taken. And Mary Cary of Fredericksburg—but (*laughing*) Mary Cary was quite contrairy——

MRS. DANDRIDGE. —and fate reserved him for Martha. Well, no marriage that I can remember has made such a stir in Virginia. It has everything in its favour. They are equal in years and not unequal in fortune. Colonel Washington will be one of the greatest land-owners in the colony—as well as one of the most respected men.

MRS. LEWIS. My dear brother! I think he deserves his happiness.

CULLY *opens the door,* L., *and announces.*

CULLY. De hon'ble Major Chamberlayne; Mas'r William Dandridge; Mas'r Bartholomew Dandridge.

The gentlemen enter, wearing riding boots, but otherwise in festal attire.

CHAMBERLAYNE (*a bluff, hearty personage*). Mrs. Dandridge, Madam, I kiss your hand. (*Does so.*)

MRS. DANDRIDGE. You are welcome, Major Chamberlayne. Let me make you known to Mrs. Fielding Lewis, the bridegroom's sister.

CHAMBERLAYNE (*bowing*). I am proud to call myself your brother's friend, Madam. (MRS. LEWIS *curtsies.*)

MRS. DANDRIDGE. Well, William—well, Bartholomew——

WILLIAM. Your servant, Madam.

BARTHOLOMEW. Good day to you, mother-in-law. (*Greetings.*)

MRS. DANDRIDGE. Mrs. Lewis, let me present to you my two sons—sturdy lads, you'll admit—but sometimes rather troublesome children.

WILLIAM. We have a stern parent, Madam.

CHAMBERLAYNE. But where is the bride?

ELIZABETH *tears open the door,* L., *and dashes in, greatly excited.*

ELIZABETH. Oh, mother, Sister Martha is coming downstairs—and don't she just look splendenshus.

MRS. DANDRIDGE. Splendenshus, child! Where *do* you get your language?

ELIZABETH. It was Cully that said it—I thought it such a nice word. (*She curtsies to* MAJOR CHAMBERLAYNE. *Her half-brothers stoop and kiss her.*)

MARTHA CUSTIS *enters* L., *followed by her sister* FANNY—MRS. BURWELL BASSETT. *Descriptions exist of* MARTHA'S *dress—which may or may not be adhered to.*

CHAMBERLAYNE. Ah, here she comes! (*Bowing*) Mrs. Martha, your humble servant! (MARTHA *curtsies to him, and then to her brothers.*)

MARTHA. Good morning, Brother William. Good morning, Brother Bartholomew.

THE BROTHERS. Good morning, Sister Patsy.

She holds out both hands. WILLIAM *kisses the right hand,* BARTHOLOMEW *the left, simultaneously.*

BARTHOLOMEW (*keeping hold of her hand and raising it, as he stands at arm's length, regarding her*). Sakes alive, sister! How fine we are! You might be a princess.

MARTHA. I wouldn't change places with one, brother.

CHAMBERLAYNE. Well said, Mistress Martha! And I hope you don't forget that I am, so to say, the founder of the feast.

MARTHA. Indeed, Major, 'twas you that brought us acquainted. For my part, I bear you no malice, and I hope that, thirty years hence, Colonel Washington may say the same.

MRS. DANDRIDGE. What are you talking about, Martha, you and the Major?

CHAMBERLAYNE. Faith, Ma'am, I'm reminding Mistress Martha that I have one good action to my credit.

MRS. DANDRIDGE. And what was that?

MARTHA. Nothing less than inviting Colonel Washington home to dinner.

CHAMBERLAYNE. 'Twas in a happy hour I met him at the ferry, posting to Williamsburg. "Come home with me to dinner, Colonel George," says I, "and let me present you to my lovely and amiable guest, Mistress Martha Custis." "Nay, sir," says he, "I must beg you to excuse me. The Governor expects me at Williamsburg, and we have weighty matters to discuss." So we had it up and down, but I would take no denial. "Bishop," says he to his servant at last, "I am to dine with Major Chamberlayne; but bring me my horse not a moment later than five, for we must be in Williamsburg to-night." The horse came at five, but the rider could not tear himself away. He tarried till six, he lingered till seven, and then 'twas too late to ride that

night. The Governor and the urgent public business had to wait; but 'tis my belief that, before he set forth on the morrow, the private business was fairly afoot that has brought us here this day.

MARTHA. There you are wrong, sir: 'twas at least a month later that Colonel Washington honoured me with the offer of his hand.

MRS. LEWIS. My brother is not apt to be precipitate in his actions.

CHAMBERLAYNE. Never tell me that it took him a month to make up his mind.

BARTHOLOMEW. But having made up his mind, he had still to summon up his courage.

MARTHA. Nay, brother, Colonel Washington has never to *summon up* his courage, for it never deserts him.

CHAMBERLAYNE. Not when he has Frenchmen or Indians to face—but a fair lady is a different matter.

MARTHA. Do you think, sir, that the soldier who saved all that *could* be saved in General Braddock's disaster —the man who had his horse shot under him and four bullet-holes in his coat—would play a less manly part in—other things—than in war?

CHAMBERLAYNE. Surely you are not to learn, Madam, that modesty ever goes hand in hand with bravery.

BARTHOLOMEW. Have you not heard, sister, what took place but a week ago in the House of Burgesses, when the Colonel resigned his command?

MARTHA. He told me that the House received him with flattering cordiality—nothing more.

BARTHOLOMEW. He did not tell you what Speaker Robinson said when he stammered and could find no words to reply to the praises heaped upon him? He did not mention that?

MARTHA. What did the Speaker say?

BARTHOLOMEW. "Sit down, Mr. Washington," he said "sit down—your modesty is equal to your valour, and that surpasses the power of any language I possess."

MARTHA (*after a short pause*). Thank you for telling me, brother. I should never have heard it from the Colonel. That, I believe, is the one sort of secret he keeps from me.

CHAMBERLAYNE. Joking apart, Mistress Martha, you are marrying a very fine fellow.

MARTHA. Joking apart, Major Chamberlayne, I am quite of that opinion.

CHAMBERLAYNE. Even when he was no more than a boy, men saw in him a Man. Poor Braddock, who was only too apt to despise colonials, esteemed and loved George Washington; and begad, it wasn't because he knuckled under to him either.

MARTHA. I'd like to see him knuckling under to any one!

CHAMBERLAYNE. I remember, when he came back from that massacre on the Ohio, Parson Davies of Hanover County spoke from the pulpit of the "heroic youth," Colonel Washington, and declared that Providence had preserved him for some great purpose.

MARTHA. If he had been killed on the Ohio he couldn't have married me.

CHAMBERLAYNE. Ha-ha-ha! Good i'faith. The prophecy is fulfilled—this is the great purpose young George was reserved for! You are a sly one, Mistress Martha!

The sound of a distant horn is heard. The DANDRIDGES, MRS. LEWIS *and* ELIZABETH *go to the windows and look out. Negroes are heard cheering.* CULLY *appears at the door,* L.

CULLY. His Exency de Gub'nor's cha'yot am drivin' up de paddock, an' Cun'l Washington an' udder gemmans ridin' longside it.

MARTHA. He mustn't find me here! Fanny, and dear Mrs. Lewis, pray come with me to the parlour. (*To* MRS. DANDRIDGE) Will you, Madam, receive the gentlemen? Elizabeth, come!

ELIZABETH. Mayn't I stay and receive Colonel George?

MARTHA. Oh, very well. (*To* MRS. LEWIS, *as they go out.*) The child adores him.

Exeunt MARTHA, MRS. BASSETT *and* MRS. LEWIS.

MRS. DANDRIDGE (*to* CULLY). Has Dr. Mossum come yet, Cully?

CULLY (*as he follows the ladies out*). De reb'rend gem'man hab not yet arrove. [*Exit.*

CHAMBERLAYNE. Come, young men, we must receive His Excellency. [*Goes out with the* DANDRIDGES.

ELIZABETH (*standing beside* MRS. DANDRIDGE). Mother, is it true that Colonel George has killed hundreds of Frenchmen and Indians?

MRS. DANDRIDGE. No doubt he has killed some, my dear, else they would have killed *him.*

ELIZABETH. But he is so gentle and kind—why should they want to kill him?

MRS. DANDRIDGE. You must ask the kings that make the wars, my dear—and I doubt whether *they* could tell.

ELIZABETH. Mother—when King George dies, will Colonel George be king?

MRS. DANDRIDGE (*laughing*). Sh, sh, child! You are talking treason. Don't let the Governor hear you.

CULLY (*at door,* L., *announcing*). His hon'ble Exency de Gub'nor, His Lo'dship de Lo'd Fairfax, Cun'l George Washinton, Mr. John 'Gustine Washinton, Mr. Cha'les Washinton.

They enter in the order stated, followed by MAJOR CHAMBERLAYNE *and the two* DANDRIDGES. WASHINGTON'S *costume is described as "a coat of blue*

cloth, lined with red silk and adorned with silver trimmings, a white satin waistcoat, knee-breeches and shoes with buckles of gold, powdered hair, and a straight dress sword." As he is here represented as having just dismounted, some sort of boots might perhaps be substituted for the shoes. The other gentlemen, though not quite so resplendent, should be handsomely dressed.

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR FAUQUIER, *a man of fifty-five, goes up to* MRS. DANDRIDGE, *whom he evidently knows, and bows.*

GOVERNOR. Mrs. Dandridge, Madam—I hope I see you well.

MRS. DANDRIDGE (*curtsying deeply*). Your Excellency is most obleeging.

WASHINGTON (*comes forward and kisses her hand*). I believe, Madam, you do not know my kind friend, Lord Fairfax, Mrs. Dandridge. (FAIRFAX, *a man of over seventy, bows.*) Permit me to present my brothers, Mr. John Augustine Washington, Mr. Charles Washington. (*Greetings.*)

MRS. DANDRIDGE. We are honoured by your presence, Your Excellency and my Lord.

GOVERNOR. It is a duty, no less than a pleasure, to do honour to Colonel Washington.

FAIRFAX. You will have a good son in young George, Madam—he has been as a son to me.

WASHINGTON (*looking round*). And—and—the bride, Madam?

MRS. DANDRIDGE (*laughing*). Have no fear, Colonel—she has not run away—she but awaits the hour of the ceremony in another room. It still lacks some minutes of noon, and the canonical gentleman has not yet arrived.

FAIRFAX. I told Colonel George we were setting forth too early, but his impatience was not to be restrained.

The GOVERNOR *and* LORD FAIRFAX *stand before the fire.* MRS. DANDRIDGE *resumes her seat above it. The other gentlemen stand around.* ELIZABETH, *who has been more or less concealed behind her mother, steals up to* WASHINGTON *and plucks the skirt of his coat.*

WASHINGTON (*looking down at her*). Ah, Miss Betsy, have I overlooked thee? I was much to blame. (*Stoops and kisses her, then takes her hand and leads her forward.*) Your Excellency, my Lord—permit me to present a young lady whom in ten minutes, I trust, it will be my privilege to call sister. (ELIZABETH *curtsies,* FAUQUIER *and* FAIRFAX *bow.*)

FAIRFAX. As fine a reverence, little lady, as ever I saw at the Court of Queen Anne.

MRS. DANDRIDGE. Pray, my Lord, do not turn the child's head. Come hither, Elizabeth. (ELIZABETH *stands by her mother's side.*)

GOVERNOR. I trust, Colonel Washington, that your marriage does not involve our losing your services in the field.

WASHINGTON. Indeed, sir, I hope to beat my sword—such as it is—into a ploughshare.

FAIRFAX. Why, George, from a boy you were ambitious of the profession of arms.

WASHINGTON. I still entertain a high opinion of it; but, please God, my fighting days are over.

FAIRFAX. I remember when you would fain have gone to sea as a midshipman.

WASHINGTON. 'Twas a boyish whim; but I own I was greatly cast down when my mother's cousin said to her: "Rather than put your son in the English navy, apprentice him to a tinker."

FAIRFAX. And later—only four years ago—you were eager to exchange a blue coat for a red, and accept a king's commission.

WASHINGTON. I was four years younger, my Lord. I now see that I should never have been received as an equal by the English officers, and we Virginians do not love to rank as inferiors.

GOVERNOR. But, sir, you may again be called upon to defend His Majesty's dominions against the French. So long as they hold Canada and Louisiana, these colonies are never secure.

FAIRFAX. I hear whispers of a projected expedition against Quebec. Does Your Excellency know aught of it?

GOVERNOR. Officially, my Lord, nothing at all. But it would not greatly surprise me to learn that General James Wolfe was to have a command on this side of the Atlantic.

WASHINGTON. What! Wolfe of Louisburg! A fine fellow! I should be proud to serve under him.

FAIRFAX (*laughing*). So, so! You would unsheath your ploughshare at the call of glory! George, George! You will not easily sink the soldier in the *husband*-man.

WASHINGTON. You may laugh, my Lord; but the glory I most affect is that of taming the wilderness and teaching the earth to bring forth its fruits in season.

FAIRFAX. You hold with my poor friend Jonathan Swift that the greatest benefactor of his kind is he who can make two ears of corn grow where only one grew before.

WASHINGTON. Whoever said that said a very true thing. The noblest use of the sword is to clear a path for the plough.

GOVERNOR. Then, Colonel, I think I can promise you opportunities to employ your sword to that end. We have not yet done with the French beyond the mountains.

WASHINGTON. I, sir, am as resolute as any one that our westward extension shall not be hemmed in by an alien people.

GOVERNOR. Some day, after a great Western campaign, I may have the pleasure of presenting Colonel Washington and his bride at the Court of St. James's.

WASHINGTON (*laughing*). That must be as my bride shall determine. (*Turning to* MRS. DANDRIDGE) What think you, Madam? Will Martha have a mind to make her curtsy at Court?

MRS. DANDRIDGE. Why, Colonel, you may as well ask: "Is Martha a woman?"

WASHINGTON. For my own part, I admit my longing desire to visit the great metropolis of this Empire. But whatever my kind friend here may say (*indicating* FAIRFAX) my one real ambition is to live and die as a tiller of the soil on the banks of the Potomac.

FAIRFAX. To sit under your own vine and fig-tree, no man making you afraid?

WASHINGTON. You have said it, my Lord. So much, methinks, is the right of every man; and no man need crave for more.

CULLY (*appearing at the door*, L.). De Reb'rend Dr. Mossum present his comp'nts, an' all is prepar'd fer de nupshl so-lem-niz-ashn.

A clock in the hall is heard to strike twelve.

MRS. DANDRIDGE (*rising*). Punctual to the minute!

WASHINGTON. You will excuse me, gentlemen. Mistress Elizabeth, will you conduct me to your sister? (ELIZABETH *takes his hand and leads him out by the door*, L.)

CULLY *throws open the double door, and reveals the Clergyman waiting in front of a table which more or less suggests an altar. It is decked with flowers in silver bowls and goblets, and with silver candlesticks. The altar should probably be raised by a single step, on which the Clergyman stands.* MRS. DANDRIDGE *ushers the* GOVERNOR, LORD FAIRFAX *and the other gentlemen to seats in front.*

Other guests enter the room; she welcomes them in dumb show and shows them seats. Some white servants and one or two house-negroes take the back places. CULLY *watches the open door,* L., *till he sees the bride and bridegroom approaching; then he opens the foremost window and waves a gorgeous handkerchief. The negroes outside strike up a hymn. (Perhaps one of Dr. Watts's hymns would do; perhaps something better could be discovered.)* WASHINGTON *enters with* MARTHA *on his arm,* ELIZABETH *bearing her train, and* MRS. LEWIS *and* MRS. BASSETT *following. They pass up the short aisle, the company rising and facing round to them. A verse of the hymn comes to an end, and the Clergyman is about to begin the service when the negroes strike up another verse. The Clergyman shakes his head as* CULLY, *who throws up the window and shouts.*

CULLY. Stop dat dar hollerin', yo' dad-blame niggers! Ef A catches up wid yer, yer'll sing anudder chune!

He bangs down the window: the hymn has ceased. The company decorously repress smiles, and face towards the parson, who begins the service as

The Curtain falls.

SCENE SECOND

The Thirty-first of August, 1774. *G. W. and M. W. aged forty-two.*

A room at Mount Vernon, opening upon the piazza. This room must be carefully studied; but it must be remembered that Mount Vernon was considerably altered during the later years of WASHINGTON'S *life. The one indispensable entrance is that to the back, opening on the piazza. There ought to be at least one window, with a window-seat, either* R. *or* L.

The curtain rises on an empty stage. There is a dinner-table in the middle of the room, at which it is evident that a party of eight or thereabouts has just finished dinner.

Voices are heard on the piazza, evidently calling to departing guests: "Good-bye, good-bye!" "Our compliments to Mrs. Mason." "Pleasant journey." "Come again soon!" etc., etc. Then MARTHA WASHINGTON, EDMUND PENDLETON, PATRICK HENRY *and* GEORGE WASHINGTON *enter the room, and while conversing resume their places at table.* PENDLETON *is a man of fifty-three,* HENRY *of thirty-eight.*

PENDLETON. Ought not we, too, to be getting to horse?

WASHINGTON. No, no, Mr. Pendleton, we have time before us. Our friends have twice our distance to ride.

MARTHA. If you leave in half an hour you will easily finish your first stage by daylight.

WASHINGTON. A glass of wine, Mr. Pendleton. (*Pours one for him.*) Mr. Henry, if you will not help yourself, pray help Mrs. Washington. (*Passes the decanter to him.*)

PENDLETON (*to* MARTHA). You ought to accompany us, Madam.

MARTHA. No, no, Mr. Pendleton, I am a country mouse. I should be ill at ease in the whirl of a Metropolis like Philadelphia—a city of twenty thousand people.

WASHINGTON. Well, gentlemen, it has been a great pleasure to Mrs. Washington and myself to receive you at Mount Vernon. I could have wished that the occasion of your coming had been a more peaceable one—a fox-chase, perhaps, or the races at Alexandria——

MARTHA. But you are all the more welcome, gentlemen, as champions of a great cause.

WASHINGTON. Well said, my dear! Colonel Pendleton, Mr. Henry, I drink to you! (*Does so;* MRS. WASHINGTON *likewise; bows exchanged.*)

HENRY. But for the cause, Madam, you would scarcely have seen *me* here. The diversions of you gentlefolks of the tide-waters are beyond the ambitions of our inland rusticity.

MARTHA. Why, Mr. Henry, I hear of you as a sportsman.

HENRY. I go out with my gun in the woods, Madam—that is all. And I confess I do not share the Colonel's regret for the occasion of our coming hither. I look forward with joy to this Continental Congress, which, if I have any voice in the matter, will assert once for all our rights as free Americans.

WASHINGTON. You cannot but have a great voice in the matter, Mr. Henry. We all know the power of that voice, and rejoice to know that it will always be raised for freedom.

MARTHA. Mr. Henry is like the war-horse of Scripture, scenting the battle afar off.

PENDLETON. Good, Madam! Mrs. Washington knows you, Henry.

HENRY. You are a lawyer yourself, Colonel Pendleton, and a pretty hard hitter at the bar.

WASHINGTON. Yes, gentlemen, you are orators both, and contention is your element. But I am a man of peace.

PENDLETON. A man of peace, Colonel! The French and the Indians, I believe, do not give you that character.

MARTHA. Colonel Washington is a man of peace because he has seen war.

WASHINGTON. Indeed, I cannot abandon the hope that England will return to her senses and admit our rights, without compelling us to wrest them from her. I have always said that, though no man should scruple to use arms in defence of liberty, yet they should be the last resource.

HENRY. They *will* be the last resource, Colonel, depend upon it; and to that resource we shall ere long be driven.

MARTHA. May a squaw speak her mind to the Chiefs of the Great Council-Fire?

WASHINGTON. It is not customary among the Indians, my dear, but as we are not yet in war-paint——

PENDLETON. Pray, let us hear your view, Mrs. Washington.

HENRY. By all means, Madam.

MARTHA. Then it seems to me that we are already at war. Soldiers have been sent to Boston to force the people of Massachusetts Bay to do what they don't want to do—what they are resolved not to do. What is that but war? And when the people hit back, the soldiers killed them. What is that but war? And now the whole town is to be ruined by military force because the people refuse to dance to a tune that is not of their own calling. What is that but war?

HENRY (*thumping the table*). Water-drinker as I am, Colonel Washington, I must beg you to fill me a bumper to drink the health of Mrs. Washington. (*Holds out his glass;* WASHINGTON *fills it;* HENRY *holds it up to* MRS. WASHINGTON.) Madam, I salute you! If all

the women of America think and speak as you do, the result of this conflict cannot be doubtful.

PENDLETON. If King George could hear you, Madam, he would think twice before driving us to extremities.

HENRY. Then thank God he does *not* hear; for it is time this matter were settled. If King George the Third came to reason and we kissed his hand, we should be leaving our children to the tender mercies of King George the Fourth, or King George the Fifth, or King George the Sixth, who would *not* come to reason.

WASHINGTON. There I am not wholly with you, Mr. Henry. I am as resolute as you to resist oppression; but I am fain to believe that it is the Ministry and the Parliament we are at odds with—not the Crown of Great Britain.

HENRY. Believe me, Colonel, a distinction without a difference. I am not, like Dr. Franklin, in the secrets of the Court of St. James's. I do not know whether the King is the moving spirit in this matter, or is himself led by the nose. In the one case he is wicked, in the other case he is weak—does it greatly matter which?

PENDLETON. Mr. Henry, you go too far.

HENRY. You, Mr. Pendleton, were one of those who cried "Treason!" when I reminded the Assembly that Cæsar had had his Brutus and Charles the First his Cromwell; but the only treason I know is treason against the people of America.

PENDLETON. Mr. Henry, I——

WASHINGTON. Gentlemen, gentlemen, let us not fall out about words. We are all agreed on the right of resistance to tyranny. When we have disarmed the tyranny, it will be time enough to decide who, precisely, was the tyrant.

MARTHA. My father has often told me how his grandfather fought on the side of the Parliament in the Civil War. "The Parliament," he said, "were not fighting against

King Charles. Oh no! that would have been treason. They were fighting *for* King Charles *against* his evil counsellors. And they fought for King Charles so stoutly and so loyally that at last they cut his head off." That, I believe, is loyalty as Mr. Henry understands it.

HENRY. Yes, because his head was the worst of his evil counsellors.

MARTHA. Was it not rather his heart?

WASHINGTON. We are jesting with serious things. It is no light matter to fall out with a people and a power like the people and the power of Great Britain.

PENDLETON. If Mr. Pitt were in power, and had not declined into my Lord Chatham, all these troubles would soon be at an end.

HENRY (*hotly*). No, no, and again no, Mr. Pendleton! Mr. Pitt was, and Lord Chatham is, an Englishman; and no Englishman lives who will admit that we colonists, forsooth!, have equal rights with himself.

MARTHA. People in England, it seems to me, overlook the difference between a colonist and a convict. They send us the dregs of their prisons, and then say, "Birds of a feather flock together."

WASHINGTON. You are too warm, my dear——

HENRY. Mrs. Washington is right, Colonel. It is time we had done with all pedantries about charters, and privileges, and internal and external taxation. We claim absolute equality of rights; and if we let ourselves be put off with less, we are—well, in Mrs. Washington's presence I won't say what we are.

MARTHA. We all know what you mean, Mr. Henry, and we applaud the sentiment.

HENRY. Thank you, Madam. How can you pretend, Mr. Pendleton, that your Mr. Pitt would have allowed us equal rights? Did he not say in his place in Parliament—

this man to whom some of us have been ninnies enough to set up statues—did he not say, "I assert our right to bind their trade, confine their manufactures—exercise every power whatsoever—except that of taking money out of their pockets without their consent." As if they could bind our trade and confine our manufactures without taking money out of our pockets!

MARTHA. 'Tis as though a highwayman were to say: "Hand over your watch, and your valise, and be quick about it; but if I touch your purse, without your consent, call me a thief."

HENRY. The case to a tittle, Madam. The ground of difference between us and Great Britain is simply this: The British think that we exist for their benefit, whereas we have the temerity to suppose that we exist for our own. I trust you are with me, Colonel Washington?

WASHINGTON. There is much in what you say, Mr. Henry. I myself have felt the keenest resentment at the doings of our lordly masters in Great Britain. Such an act of vindictive tyranny as the Boston Port Bill is beyond all defence, and the claim to carry offending patriots across the ocean for trial is wholly intolerable. Yet I cannot abandon the hope that the voice of reason may make itself heard.

HENRY. Not till it speaks from the cannon's mouth, Colonel!

WASHINGTON. You may be right, Mr. Henry. I shall certainly not flinch from extreme measures, should they prove necessary. But it is hard to believe that the mother country——

HENRY. The stepmother country——

MARTHA. No, no, Mr. Henry—a true mother, not a stepmother, is slow enough to realize that her child has grown out of leading-strings. That, I am sure, is where the mischief lies. You know, Mr. Pendleton, my son, John Parke Custis, was happily married last February. You would not believe how hard it was for me to admit,

as he grew up, that there must be an end to the time when he could be slapped and put in the corner whenever he was naughty. So the mother country refuses to admit to herself that we have grown up. Thinking us naughty children, she has slapped us and put us in the corner; but however naughty we may be, we are children no longer. That is what she has to learn.

HENRY. And by heaven we will teach her by pulling down the house about her ears!

WASHINGTON. Gently, gently, Mr. Henry! Remember the house you speak of is a great Empire, and we are but a little people, not without our jealousies and bickerings.

HENRY. Is not this Continental Congress to which we are bound precisely a proof that jealousies and bickerings are forgotten, and that we stand as a united nation?

MARTHA. Yes, and but for our friends across the water, we should never have attained that unity. As we are all Virginians here, I may confess that there was a time when I did not love the Yankees.

WASHINGTON. The proof of our unity will be more complete after the Congress is over; but I do not fear the result.

MARTHA. Colonel Washington's rule in life, gentlemen, is to hope for the best but to be prepared for the worst. It is sometimes a little trying to more eager spirits like myself; yet we manage to put up with each other.

Enter CULLY, *now quite old and shaky.*

CULLY. De gem'men's ho'ses is at de steps.

WASHINGTON. One more glass, gentlemen, to drink good luck to the Continental Congress.

ALL (*rising*). Good luck to the Continental Congress!

MARTHA. And may it be the first of many!

HENRY. So say we all!

CULLY *has brought in riding coats and hats, and is preparing to help in putting on the coats.*

MARTHA. Have you packed the Colonel's writing-case, Cully?

CULLY. No, Mis' Martha—A done clean forgot it!

WASHINGTON (*going out*). I will see to it, my dear.

MARTHA. Remember, I look for frequent bulletins from the Great Council.

WASHINGTON. You shall have them, never fear. [*Exit.*

PENDLETON *and* HENRY *have put on their riding coats, and stand hat in hand.*

MARTHA (*shaking hands with them in turn*). Good-bye, gentlemen. I trust you will all stand firm. I know my George will. God be with you, gentlemen.

WASHINGTON *appears at the door, in riding coat, etc.*

WASHINGTON. Are you ready, gentlemen?

HENRY. Quite ready, Colonel.

MARTHA. I will see you in the saddle.

They bow as she takes WASHINGTON'S *arm and leads the way out.* CULLY *stands in the doorway, looking along the piazza in the direction of their exit; he joins in the cheers which are heard as the party ride off.*

MARTHA *returns alone, and goes over to the window, where she stands looking out.*

CULLY. Is it de troof, Mis' Martha, what I done hear tell, dat de Cun'l am goin' ter Philadelphy fer ter teach King Geo'ge ter min' his own bizniss?

MARTHA (*smiling*). That's not far from the truth, Cully.

CULLY. Is it de troof dat King Geo'ge wan' ter mek white folks slaves, same like black folks?

MARTHA. Not far from the truth again.

CULLY. 'Pears ter me, Mis' Martha, like King Geo'ge wuz clean out'n his five wits.

MARTHA (*at the window, waving her handkerchief*). We're beginning to think so, Cully.

CULLY. 'Caze, ef dey wuz all ter be slaves, w'y wuz white folks bo'n white an' black folks black?

MARTHA. You are as wise as Solomon, Cully. You must reason with the Colonel when he comes back. He thinks all men should be free, white folks and black folks too.

CULLY. Lordy, lordy, Mis' Martha! Me free! Don' let de Mas'r sen' me away, Mis' Martha!

MARTHA. Never fear, Cully—you're safe yet a while. (*Waving for the last time.*) They're gone. Come with me to the weaving-sheds, Cully. We must weave stout cloth, so that we may not have to buy it from England.

As she is going out, CULLY *following,*

The Curtain falls.

SCENE THIRD

The Twenty-first of June 1775—*about ten months later than the previous scene.*

Mount Vernon: the same rooms as in Scene Second. Late afternoon of a beautiful summer day.

MARTHA WASHINGTON *is seated at the spinet, playing Handel's "Lascia ch' io pianga," or some other well-known air of the period. Her daughter-in-law* ELEANOR CUSTIS, *a quite young woman, sits by the instrument watching her.* MRS. FIELDING LEWIS (BETTY WASHINGTON) *is sewing by the window.*

MRS. LEWIS (*looking out*). Ah, here comes John!

ELEANOR *rises and turns towards the door.* MARTHA *hurries through the close of the piece she is playing, finishes it, and wheels round on the music-stool towards the door just as* JOHN PARKE CUSTIS (*twenty-two years of age*) *enters along the piazza. He has evidently been riding.*

MARTHA. Well, Jack? No sign of the post?

JOHN. None, mother, though I rid half-way to Alexandria.

ELEANOR (*her arm on* JOHN'S *shoulder*). Surely, mother, there is no cause for anxiety. It is barely a week since you heard from my father-in-law.

MARTHA. I am not anxious, child—not fearful of any misadventure. But I am eager for news, as we all are, I suppose, now that war is no longer doubtful. After the attack at Lexington there can be no drawing back.

JOHN. Perhaps the British may draw back, now that we have taught them a lesson.

MARTHA. Ah no, my son—the British are not apt at learning such lessons.

MRS. LEWIS. General Gage seems to sit very quietly in Boston.

JOHN. He has discovered that the Massachusetts minute-men can shoot, and he knows that his own red-coats can't. I'm told they simply put their muskets to their shoulders, close their eyes, and blaze away.

MRS. LEWIS. They shot straight enough in the Boston Massacre.

JOHN. Because they were barely a dozen yards from the crowd. Even a blind man could hit a haystack.

MARTHA. Now that General Gage has been reinforced, we may have news from him at any moment. 'Tis said that General Howe and General Burgoyne are the best men in the British Army. And we do not know what to expect of the Massachusetts commander—what's his name?—Ward. At Lexington the minute-men seem to have been their own generals.

MRS. LEWIS. I wish George were in command at Boston.

MARTHA. What! A Virginian command a New England army! You are dreaming, sister.

MRS. LEWIS. I suppose it is not to be thought of.

JOHN. Put it the other way, Ma'am, and imagine a Yankee commanding a Virginian army.

MRS. LEWIS. Oh, that, of course, would be preposterous.

ELEANOR. My father-in-law wore his uniform when he set forth to the Congress.

MARTHA. He could not do otherwise—he is in command of the Virginian forces.

JOHN. I spoke the other day at Alexandria to a friend of this Benedict Arnold, who distinguished himself in the affair of Crown Point and Ticonderoga. He says Arnold is a daring fellow, and we shall certainly hear more of him.

MARTHA. And he is a New Englander?

JOHN. A Connecticut man.

MARTHA. Perhaps Congress will give him the command at Boston.

JOHN. The other man, Ethan Allen, seems to be a little bit crazy. Do you know what he answered when the British asked him by whose commission he acted? He said, "I demand the surrender of this fort in the name of the Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress!"

MARTHA. I see nothing crazy in that, my son. Do not mistake an enthusiast for a madman.

ELEANOR (*who has picked up a thick pamphlet from the table and been turning over its leaves*). Oh, John—what book is this you have got hold of?

JOHN (*looking over her shoulder*). That? Oh, it's a Tory pamphlet Lord Fairfax gave me yesterday. I have not looked at it yet.

ELEANOR (*handing it to* MARTHA). Just look, mother—look at the title.

MARTHA (*reads*). "Taxation no Tyranny." Well, at all events the writer nails his colours to the mast.

JOHN. Lord Fairfax says he is one Sam Johnson, a lexi-lexi-cographer.

ELEANOR. What in the wide world is that?

JOHN. Oh, a fellow that writes dictionaries.

ELEANOR. And what's the use of writing dictionaries?

JOHN. Why, to help people find the longest words for everything.

MARTHA (*who has been looking through the pamphlet*). Mr. Johnson, I am afraid, does not love us, but here is something that might have taught him not to despise us: "They multiply with the fecundity of their own rattlesnakes, so that every quarter of a century doubles their numbers."

MRS. LEWIS. If that be true, how long will it take us to be a greater nation than Britain herself? There, Jack, is a problem for your arithmetic.

JOHN (*laughing*). Aunt Betty, I give it up.

MARTHA. Mr. Johnson himself might have thought of working it out. But he no doubt proposes to keep on killing us off, as we kill rattlesnakes.

ELEANOR. How can he write of us with such contempt?

MARTHA. He must have written before the news of Lexington reached England. Up to then he had only heard our rattle; now he knows that we have fangs as well.

JOHN. Yes, begad, he does!

MARTHA. But he is willing to let some of us survive. He prophesies that the contest will end in the avowal of "English superiority and American obedience."

JOHN. I wonder why you and I, mother, have got to obey Mr. Sam Johnson.

MARTHA. Because he was born in England, my son, and we, like rattlesnakes, in Virginia.

ELEANOR. Oh but, mother, you haven't read the most spiteful thing he says. (*Takes up the pamphlet and looks for the passage.*) Ah, here it is: "If slavery be thus fatally contagious, how is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?"

MRS. LEWIS. "Drivers of negroes," indeed! As if our faithful, devoted black servants required to be "driven"!

ELEANOR. As if they were not far better off here than in savage, heathen Africa!

MARTHA. Mr. Johnson, it would seem, does not read the Scriptures, else he would know that they everywhere allow the holding of bondmen and bondwomen. But, sister, we must not speak too positively, for you know that, in this matter, your brother inclines to Mr. Johnson's view.

MRS. LEWIS. In some things George is not without a strain of the enthusiast. You know how, when he was elected to the Assembly before your marriage, he insisted on treating the freeholders of Frederick County, but treating them all round—those who voted against him, no less than his supporters.

MARTHA. That was my George all over!

JOHN (*looking out at the window*). Why, who is this, riding post-haste?

ELEANOR (*also looking out*). Oh, Aunt Betty! 'Tis Mr. Lewis.

MRS. LEWIS. My husband! Then we shall have news from Philadelphia!

MARTHA. News from George!

All gather at the door, awaiting the arrival of FIELDING LEWIS.

JOHN. He has ridden hard. His horse is reeking.

LEWIS (*without*). Betty! Martha!

MRS. LEWIS. Fielding! (*Runs out to meet him. Presently he leads her in.* MARTHA *holds out both hands to him.*)

MARTHA. Welcome to Mount Vernon!

LEWIS. Thank you, sister-in-law. I am the bearer of great news.

MARTHA. Good news?

LEWIS. Yes.

MARTHA. Have we won a battle?

LEWIS. A victory, though not exactly a battle.

MRS. LEWIS. Don't speak in riddles, Fielding.

MARTHA. First—how is Colonel Washington?

LEWIS. There is no such person as Colonel Washington.

MARTHA (*taken aback, almost alarmed*). What do you mean, brother-in-law? Tell me!

LEWIS. Colonel Washington gave place, four days ago, to General George Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Forces.

ELEANOR. Oh, mother! How glorious!

JOHN. Commander-in-chief, begad!

MRS. LEWIS. General Washington! Martha, you say nothing!

MARTHA (*who has taken hold of* JOHN'S *arm to support herself*). Because I know not whether to laugh or to cry. (*With a laugh that is half a sob, she hides her face against her son's breast. He leads her to a seat, centre.*)

MRS. LEWIS. Congress, you see, sister, does not hold it impossible for a Virginian general to command a New England army.

MARTHA. I did not really think they would; but I clung to that hope—or was it a fear?—as long as it was possible.

LEWIS. Why, sister-in-law, you should be proud and happy that George's countrymen see him for what he is—the best man among us.

MARTHA. I *am* proud—I *am* happy—but I am fearful and miserable at the same time. I have prayed and prayed that this might *not* happen, not thinking of myself alone, but because I knew that George would fain have been spared the terrible burden they have laid upon him.

LEWIS. But he was the one man—to have chosen any one else would have been to betray our cause.

MRS. LEWIS. Even in England his name is known and respected.

LEWIS. True, my dear—the name of Washington is worth ten thousand men to us.

MARTHA. You need not teach me to be proud of the name I bear; and ere long I shall be happy in the honour done to it. But how can I help also thinking of what that

honour must cost—the separation, the danger, the anxiety, perhaps—— (*She buries her face in her hands for a moment, then looks up again resolutely.*) But no! You are right, sister, I must think of nothing but that I am the wife of a great soldier, and that I must show myself worthy of him. Have you no letter for me, brother-in-law?

LEWIS. To be sure I have, sister-in-law. By the powers, I had nigh forgot it.

He produces from his breast pocket a somewhat bulky missive, tied with a blue ribbon and sealed.

MARTHA. Give it to me! (*She takes it eagerly, and seats herself by the window. She rummages in* MRS. LEWIS'S *work-basket.*) May I use your scissors, Betty?

MRS. LEWIS. Need you ask, Martha?

MARTHA *cuts the ribbon and opens the packet. A thickish blue-paper document falls to the ground.*

MRS. LEWIS (*seeing it*). A substantial epistle from the great man.

MARTHA (*picks it up and looks at the endorsement*). This is not a letter, sister.

MRS. LEWIS. What is it, then?

MARTHA. His will.

She places it on the window-ledge. A momentary silence falls on the party. MARTHA *holds up a white paper which has been wrapped round the blue document.*

MARTHA. This is his letter. (*Proceeds to read it. The others, respecting her absorption in it, talk in low voices.*)

JOHN. Were you present when my father was offered the command?

LEWIS. Indeed I was.

JOHN. Did he make a speech?

LEWIS. A very short one. What I chiefly remember was that he declined to accept any pay for his services.

JOHN. He would take no pay!

MRS. LEWIS. How like George!

LEWIS. He said that, as no money could compensate him for the loss of "domestic ease"—those were his words, I remember—he would make no profit out of the employment. He would keep careful note of his expenses, and doubted not that they would be discharged.

MRS. LEWIS. And how did Congress take that?

LEWIS. With great applause.

ELEANOR. How else *could* they take it?

LEWIS. Why, Mrs. John, their applause showed their trust in his character. An unpaid servant is apt to be a bad servant. But they knew that what George Washington undertook he would perform, pay or no pay.

JOHN (*who has for some moments been lost in thought*). I wonder, would the General give me a post on his staff?

MARTHA (*has finished her hasty perusal of the letter, and hears this speech*). John, John, would you leave me quite alone?

JOHN. Why, mother——

MARTHA. Must I give up my son as well as my husband, Eleanor? What say *you?*

ELEANOR. When Virginia needs him, mother, I shall not stand in his way.

MARTHA (*pressing her hand*). You teach me a lesson, child.

JOHN *embraces* ELEANOR. *A pause.*

LEWIS. Are we not to hear, sister-in-law, what His Excellency says?

MARTHA. Do they give him that title?

LEWIS. 'Tis his proper designation.

MRS. LEWIS. Pray let us hear, dear Martha, how my brother takes his advancement.

MARTHA (*hesitates a moment*). Well, as we are all here his nearest kin, I will read the principal portions of his letter. He says: "I am now set down to write you on a subject which fills me with inexpressible concern, and this concern is greatly aggravated when I reflect upon the uneasiness I know it will give you. It has been determined in Congress that the whole army raised for the defence of the American cause shall be out under my care—(*her voice breaks, but after a pause she pulls herself together and reads on*)—and that it is necessary for me to proceed immediately to Boston, to take up the command of it." (*Breaks off.*) To Boston! And I let him go away without his warm clothing!

LEWIS. Why, Boston is not Labrador, sister-in-law.

MARTHA. They say there is always a clammy, chill sea-fog in Massachusetts Bay.

LEWIS. Oh, it's not so bad in summer, and the fighting may be over before winter sets in.

MRS. LEWIS. At worst you can send his flannels after him, Martha.

MARTHA. I will see to it to-morrow.

MRS. LEWIS. What more does my brother say?

MARTHA (*reads*). "You may believe me . . . when I assure you in the most solemn manner that, so far from seeking this appointment, I have used every endeavour to avoid it, not only from my unwillingness to part with you and the family, but from a consciousness of its being a trust too great for my capacity."

LEWIS (*interrupting*). He said that in Congress. He said: "I declare with sincerity I do not think myself equal to the command I am honoured with."

MARTHA. 'Tis his greatest foible to undervalue himself. But he cannot hide his light under a bushel. He goes on—(*reads*)—"But as it has been a kind of destiny

that has thrown me upon this service, I shall hope that my undertaking it is designed to answer some good purpose. You might, and I suppose did, perceive from the tenor of my letters that I was apprehensive I could not avoid this appointment, as I did not pretend to intimate when I should return. That was the case. It was utterly out of my power to refuse without exposing my character to such censures as would have reflected dishonour upon myself and given pain to my friends. This, I am sure, could not, and ought not to be, pleasing to you." (*She holds the letter to her breast.*) Indeed, indeed, my dear, no! (*She resumes.*) "I shall rely, therefore, on that Providence which has hitherto preserved me and been bountiful to me, not doubting that I shall return safe to you in the fall."

LEWIS. You see he says "in the fall."

MRS. LEWIS. Before he requires his warm garments.

MARTHA. Yes, he says "the fall"—but I shall send them all the same! (*Goes on reading.*) "I shall feel no pain from the toil or danger of the campaign; my unhappiness will flow from the uneasiness I know you will feel from being left alone. I therefore beg that you will summon your whole fortitude, and pass your time as agreeably as possible. My earnest and ardent desire is that you would pursue any plan that is most likely to produce content and a tolerable degree of tranquillity; as it must add greatly to my uneasy feelings to hear that you are dissatisfied or complaining at what I really could not avoid."—And then he speaks of his will.

Pause.

LEWIS. 'Tis the letter of a soldier and a man, Sister Martha.

MARTHA. Could he write any other? But I must chide him for supposing it possible that I should be "dissatisfied or complaining." (*Briskly and almost gaily.*) Why, brother-in-law, 'tis yet an hour to supper-time, and you have had nothing after your long ride. (*Strikes a gong.*)

LEWIS. We have had other things to think of. But indeed we must drink the General's health.

CULLY *appears, coming along the piazza.*

MARTHA. Wine, Cully—madeira and burgundy—and glasses.

CULLY. Sho'ly, Mis' Martha. [*Exit.*

MRS. LEWIS. There is a rumour, Fielding, that Governor Dunmore is mightily incensed at the turn things have taken, and is preparing to conquer Virginia, as he calls it, for the King.

LEWIS. 'Tis like enough he may play some fool's trick.

JOHN. There are plenty of Tories about, but they have no great hankering after the smell of powder.

LEWIS. Still, if his Lordship did attempt a raid, he would be apt to turn his attention to the home of the Rebel General. You would be safer with us, sister-in-law.

MARTHA. Whatever happens, brother-in-law, I shall not desert my post, unless by the Rebel General's orders.

CULLY *enters with the wine and glasses on a tray, puts it down and stands by the door.*

MARTHA (*to* LEWIS). Will you drink burgundy or madeira?

LEWIS. Burgundy for a thirsty man. (*She pours it.*)

JOHN. And for me, mother. Shall I pour madeira for the ladies? (*They assent and he does so. As* MARTHA *is on the point of taking up her glass, she catches* CULLY'S *wistful eye.*)

MARTHA. Have you heard the news, Cully?

CULLY. Mas'r Lewis's nigger he done tole us—de Cun'l am chose out fer ter fight King Geo'ge.

MARTHA. Should you like to drink his health?

CULLY (*seizing a large glass that stands beside a water-jug*). Ef 'twuz de las' ack, Mis' Martha! (*She pours some burgundy into the glass—*CULLY *somewhat disappointed that she does not fill it. Then she takes up her own glass of madeira.*)

MARTHA. To His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Forces!

ALL. The Commander-in-Chief! The Commander-in-Chief!

MARTHA. And success to the Thirteen Colonies!
All drink.

CULLY (*turning his glass upside down*). Glory Halleluiah!

Curtain.

SCENE FOURTH

Part I

The Sixteenth of March, 1776—*about nine months later than the previous scene.*

A room in the Craigie (or Vassall)—now the Longfellow—House at Cambridge, Mass. The only door, L. *Opposite it two windows, with a fireplace and mirror between them. Against the back wall stands a sideboard, and over it hangs a "Grand Union Flag" attached by loops to nails in the wall. The body of the flag consists of seven red and six white stripes, with the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew in the corner, as in the British Union Jack. Two silver candlesticks of many branches stand on the sideboard, one at each end. There is a sofa above the fireplace, an armchair below it, and a large round table in the middle of the room. Afternoon light.*

[*Note.—The above description may be modified to suit an actual room in the existing house. The one essential is that there should be a clear space of blank wall at the back, on which the flag (of considerable size) can hang.*]

Martha Washington *and* Eleanor Custis *are seated at the table, sewing brown trappers'-shirts (Virginian uniform).* Mrs. Knox *and* Mrs. Mifflin, *also at the table, are rolling bandages.*

A distant cannon-shot is heard. Eleanor *starts, with a little gasp.*

Martha. Eleanor, my dear, if you start at every gunshot, John must take you back to Virginia.

Eleanor. Oh no, mother, I am not afraid. 'Tis but my nerves.

MARTHA. Much may depend on your nerves, my dear. (*To the other ladies*) I am solicitous for my coming grandchild.

MRS. KNOX. 'Tis but natural, ma'am.

ELEANOR. I assure you, dear mother, I am very well. I would not for worlds take John away from his attendance on the General. (*A couple of nearer and louder shots are heard.*) You see, I did not start.

During what follows, the cannonade continues intermittently, now loud, now low.

MARTHA. My nerves, I confess, were more tried by the silence of all those winter weeks—when we had no powder, and scarce any guns, and scarce any men—when the British, had they only known, could have walked into our trenches with only a few pikes to oppose them—when Dr. Franklin wrote urging that we should take to bows and arrows.

MRS. MIFFLIN. Dr. Franklin loves his joke.

MARTHA. 'Twas no joke, ma'am, believe me. Our fortunes hung on a hair.

MRS. KNOX. And you knew it, ma'am?

MARTHA. Not all that I know now. The General did not tell even me. But I guessed what he was going through, when every one was blaming his inactivity, and he durst not even hint at the reason for it. How often has he said to me: "Would that I could shoulder a musket and fight in the ranks, or retire into the back country and live in a wigwam."

ELEANOR. My father-in-law is always calm; but I could see about a month ago that his spirits became more cheerful.

MARTHA. Yes, the tide turned when our good Colonel Knox brought us his forty big guns from Ticonderoga. And then King George was so obleeging as to send us stores of ammunition in the brig we captured. 'Tis his own cannon-balls that we are now returning to him. (*Sound of hooves outside.*) Eleanor, that must be John!

ELEANOR *springs up and runs to the door.*

ELEANOR (*looking out*). Yes, here he is. (*All put down their work and turn to the door.*)

Enter JOHN CUSTIS *in civilian riding-dress. He kisses* ELEANOR, *and then comes forward.*

JOHN. All is going grandly, mother. I left His Excellency but an hour ago. Boston, he says, must very soon be ours!

MARTHA. Thank God for that! But will there be much fighting?

JOHN. The General does not think so. The red-coats have got their marching orders, and they know it. Their game was up when we seized Dorchester Heights ten days ago.

MARTHA. Then what is all this cannonading?

JOHN. We are fortifying Nook's Hill, which looks right down into their lines, and they are trying to stop us. But they do very little execution.

ELEANOR. Why are some of the guns so much louder than others?

JOHN. The loud ones are the British guns. See here, mother—— (*He takes a map from a side table, spreads it on the centre table, and begins pointing. The ladies gather round and look.*) Here are our batteries on Dorchester Heights; here are the British lines on Boston Neck; and here we are at Cambridge: so you see the British guns are between us and our own. I have ridden round by Roxbury and Brookline.

MARTHA. And where is—what do you call it?—Nook's Hill?

JOHN. There, you see—right over the Neck.

MRS. KNOX. To think that I have been to many a barbecue right there!

JOHN. 'Tis a pretty hot barbecue to-day—but our works are going forward in spite of it. (*To* ELEANOR) Get me a mouthful of bread and cheese, Nelly dear—I must rejoin the General.

ELEANOR. Must you go?

JOHN. Of course. He couldn't get on without his extra aide-de-camp—unpaid—like everybody else.

MARTHA. Bid Sally bring the coffee-pot and some biscuits, Eleanor. We all need a little refreshment.

ELEANOR (*opens the door, going out, but draws back, saying*). Oh, here is Mrs. Hallowell.

She holds the door open while MRS. HALLOWELL *rushes in, much excited. Then* ELEANOR *goes out, closing the door.*

MRS. HALLOWELL. Do pardon me, dear Lady Washington, intruding upon you unannounced; but I am so terribly upset——

MARTHA (*drily*). Won't you sit down?

MRS. HALLOWELL. Oh, no, no—I couldn't sit. Do tell me—I've just heard—is it true that Congress has ordered the General to batter down the whole of Boston, and not leave one stone upon another?

MARTHA. Who told you that?

MRS. HALLOWELL. Why, everybody is talking about it! Oh, say it isn't true, Lady Washington! Think of my house on Beacon Street, and the parlour chairs upholstered in gold brocade, and the dinner set with the Hallowell arms, and the cupboards full of blue chaney! (*Almost in tears*) Oh, it'll all be broken!

MARTHA. Is not your husband in Boston?

MRS. HALLOWELL. Oh yes, he's there too.

MARTHA. Aren't you afraid he might get broken?

MRS. HALLOWELL. Why, he can go down to the cellar—but he can't take all the furniture—and I never trust him to *touch* the blue chaney.

MARTHA. Mrs. Hallowell, there is no order to destroy Boston; but Congress has instructed the General to do so without hesitation should he find it necessary.

MRS. HALLOWELL (*sinking into a chair*). To think of my parlour a smoking ruin!

MARTHA. And do you know who signed these instructions, Mrs. Hallowell? The President of Congress, Mr. Hancock, who, I am told, has the finest house in Boston. *He* didn't think of his blue china.

MRS. HALLOWELL. Dear Lady Washington, my house is the third from Mr. Hancock's, with the green window-shades. Do beg the General to spare it!

MARTHA. I dare say it will come to no harm, Mrs. Hallowell.

ELEANOR *enters, followed by a negro maid with a tray on which are a coffee-pot, a silver urn, etc.*

MARTHA. A cup of coffee will cheer you up before you go.

MRS. HALLOWELL. Oh, thank you, thank you! (ELEANOR *pours her a cup.*) Well, I declare, what elegant chaney! Ah, but you should see mine! (*As she is about to drink, a particularly loud shot is heard. She starts, drops her teaspoon, spills some of her coffee, and gasps.*) Lord bless us and save us! I'm not a Tory, Lady Washington—no one can say that of me—but I do think we might have paid a few cents more for our tea rather than have all this to-do about it.

MARTHA (*pointedly, curtsying*). Good-bye, Mrs. Hallowell.

MRS. HALLOWELL (*rising and curtsying*). Good-bye, Lady Washington. Pray don't forget now—Number 25 Beacon Street, three doors from Mr. Hancock's, the house with the green shades.

[*Exit,* JOHN *bowing her out.*

MARTHA. The cackling goose! She hasn't sense enough to know that she's a Tory.

JOHN. You froze her out pretty fiercely, mother.

MARTHA. She didn't know that either.

Meanwhile coffee has been poured and cakes handed round. JOHN *has something more substantial placed before him. He resumes his seat, and, after drinking a mouthful of coffee, says:*

JOHN. Have you heard the latest news from His Most Gracious Majesty?

MARTHA. No—what is it?

MRS. MIFFLIN. Do tell!

MRS. KNOX. Is he coming out himself, to hang, draw and quarter us?

JOHN. Not he—but he has bought fifteen thousand of his brother Germans—fellows they call Hessians—to come over and cut our throats.

ELEANOR AND MRS. KNOX. Hessians!

JOHN. Yes, and Brunswickers.

MARTHA. Foreign mercenaries!

JOHN. You have hit it, mother.

MARTHA. Can it be true, John?

JOHN. True beyond a doubt. The bargain was signed in January.

MARTHA. Well—I rejoice to hear it!

ELEANOR. Oh, mother!

MRS. KNOX. Do you say so, Ma'am?

MARTHA. Yes, I do—for this infamy must silence the General's last doubts. He has tried hard—for 'twas in his generous nature—to think and act as though this were a civil war, to be ended by reconciliation. But what reconciliation can there be with a power that brings hired murderers into the field?

MRS. KNOX. Then you think this means——

MARTHA. INDEPENDENCE!

A pause.

MRS. KNOX (*in an awed whisper*). Independence! Can we stand alone?

MRS. MIFFLIN. My husband says the Colonies would always be falling out, and flying at each other's throat.

MARTHA. Do you believe that? Are Massachusetts Bay, and New York, and Pennsylvania, and the Carolinas and my dear Virginia nothing but a pack of quarrelsome children that need a nurse with a birch rod to look after them?

JOHN. And a birch rod bought in Germany! Hurrah for independence, say I!

MARTHA (*pointing to the flag on the wall*). When I saw that flag hoisted on New Year's Day, I wondered why we kept the British Union in the corner. Surely all the world will wonder now.

MRS. KNOX. What would you have in its place?

JOHN. They have a good flag in South Carolina—a rattlesnake just rising to strike, with the motto "Don't tread on me."

MARTHA. That is rather a crest than a flag. For a flag should be something simple, that speaks without words.

JOHN. Come, Nelly—you acquired all the accomplishments at Annapolis—design us a Continental flag!

ELEANOR. I only learned to make wax flowers.

JOHN. Not quite what we want, *is* it?

MRS. MIFFLIN (*sitting opposite the silver urn*). What is this engraved on the urn, Lady Washington?

MARTHA. The General's coat of arms, Mrs. Mifflin.

MRS. MIFFLIN. Well, here are stripes, like those on the flag—and three stars. Why not have stars in the corner instead of those crosses?

A pause.

MARTHA. I wonder!

JOHN. A great idea, ma'am.

MARTHA. Would the General like it?

JOHN. Why not, mother?

MARTHA. He might think it looked—presuming, to make a flag out of his arms.

JOHN. Oh, no one will know—the flag will look quite different. We won't have only three stars—we'll have thirteen—one for each colony.

MARTHA. For each State, my son.

JOHN. Right, mother—for each State. Suppose we try it. Eleanor, I've seen you cut paper stars.

ELEANOR. Yes, that accomplishment I did learn.

JOHN. Then cut us thirteen while I get down the flag.

He climbs upon a chair, and is about to stand on the sideboard, when his mother cries, "Oh, Jack!" and hastily places a cushion to preserve the polish. Standing on the cushion, he unhooks the flag, saying, "Please clear the table, ladies." MARTHA *and the two guests do so, depositing trays, cups, etc., wherever convenient.* ELEANOR, *meanwhile, is folding sheets of paper and cutting stars.*

JOHN, *having detached the flag, springs down with it and spreads it on the table.*

JOHN. There! What color shall the field be?

MARTHA. Blue, of course—where should stars shine but in the sky?

MRS. KNOX (*rummaging in a basket of remnants*). Here is a piece of blue stuff.

MARTHA. Give it to me! (*She takes the piece of cloth, applies it to the Union of the flag and, with a pair of large scissors, trims it to the required size.*) There! Now how to arrange the stars?

MRS. MIFFLIN. A circle?

MARTHA. That might do. Let me see one of your stars, Eleanor.

ELEANOR (*handing her one*). Here, mother.

MARTHA (*considering*). H'm! There would not be room for a circle of these stars—and if they were smaller, they would not show clearly.

JOHN. Make a cross of them—three in each arm and one in the middle.

MARTHA. Let me see! I think I have it! (*She takes the scissors and reflectively taps on the Union the points marked ° on the diagram:*

saying meanwhile) One, two, three—one, two, three—one, two, three—that makes nine. Nine from thirteen leaves four—and the four go here—here—here—and here (*tapping the points marked* x). Now for a handful of stars, Eleanor.

ELEANOR. All I have ready, mother. (*Hands her four more.*)

MARTHA (*placing the stars on the blue field, and considering them*). Dear Mrs. Knox, will you reach me that pincushion? (MRS. KNOX *does so.* MARTHA *begins pinning down the stars.*) So——! and so——! and so——!

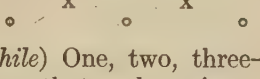
JOHN. 'Tis a new constellation, mother.

MARTHA. Rising in the western sky?

JOHN. The British astronomers won't like the looks of it.

MARTHA. So——! and so——! Now for a needle and thread to tack them down. (*She finds one in her work-basket.*)

MRS. MIFFLIN (*contemplating the stars, which are arranged in a cross of five, thus:*



pending the arrival of the other stars). Well now, *isn't* that cunning!

MARTHA (*busy sewing at the stars*). What will the General say to it, I wonder?

MRS. KNOX. And Congress—are *they* prepared to banish the British Union?

MARTHA. Well, whatever the men may say, we women are making our answer to King George and his—what did you call them, Jack?

JOHN. Hessians, mother.

MARTHA. —to King George and his Hessians—we are cleansing our flag! More stars, Eleanor!

The cannonade has for some minutes been livelier. MARTHA *is busy pinning or sewing as*

The Curtain falls.

SCENE FOURTH

Part II

The Seventeenth of March 1776—*the next evening. The same room. Two or three candles, lighted, on the centre table; the branch candlesticks on the sideboard unlighted. A grey veil covers the flag, coming down so low that it can easily be plucked away. Until the candles are lighted, this part of the scene is quite in the shade.*

Martha Washington *is superintending the negro maid, who is laying a small cloth on the centre table and setting a cover for one, with a cold fowl, a loaf of bread, etc.*

Martha. That will do, Sally. You can go to bed now. I will attend to the General when he comes. Good night, Sally.

Sally (*curtsying at the door*). Good night, Ma'am.

Martha *goes to the sideboard, unlocks it with a key hanging at her chatelaine, and brings out a black bottle. She takes a corkscrew from drawer and very deliberately and carefully draws the cork. Having savored the aroma of the wine, she loosely replaces the cork and sets the bottle beside the fire. Then she goes to the back, slightly raises the veil that hangs over the flag, and looks up under it, as though to make sure that everything is in order. She drops the veil again, takes up some knitting, seats herself at the fireside and knits, crooning to herself in a low voice:*

'Tis God that still supports our right;
His just revenge our foes pursues.
'Tis He that, with resistless might,
Fierce nations to His power subdues.

A distant sound of hooves is heard. She drops her knitting in her lap and listens. Then a sentry is vaguely heard to challenge, there is a murmur of reply, and the sentry's voice rings out clear, "Pass, friend. All's well." MARTHA *opens the door and looks out into the hall, says to herself "'Tis he!" and retreats a little from the door.* GEORGE WASHINGTON *enters, throws down his hat on a chair, comes up to her and embraces her.*

WASHINGTON. My dear Martha! (*An aide-de-camp appears in the doorway.* WASHINGTON *speaks to him, looking over his shoulder.*) Come for me in fifteen minutes, Captain Chandler—not a moment more.

THE OFFICER (*saluting*). Very good, sir. [*Exit.*

MARTHA. George, dear—are they gone?

WASHINGTON. The last British sail passed into the mist at sunset.

MARTHA. And Boston is ours! Thank God! Thank God!

WASHINGTON. Yes, Boston is ours—Boston, that was to have been chastised and humiliated by our lords and masters. I have watched them all day from Dorchester Heights, making their exit. They have slunk away with their tails between their legs. 'Tis a good beginning.

MARTHA. Only a beginning, dear? Not the beginning of the end?

WASHINGTON. No, no, my dear—the end is yet far off. There is danger even in this first success. 'Twill raise false hopes and undue confidence. We must be prepared. (*He throws off his cloak, unbuckles his sword, and approaches the table.*)

MARTHA. You cannot remain for the night?

WASHINGTON. Alas, no! I make my entrance into the city early to-morrow. I sleep at Mr. Allen's at Roxbury.

MARTHA. Then employ your time to the best advantage, my dear. I think you will find this chicken tender.

(*Brings the bottle from the fireside.*) Let me pour you a glass of claret. (*She does so.* WASHINGTON *takes his seat and begins to carve the fowl. She cuts bread for him, etc.*)

WASHINGTON. Where is Eleanor?

MARTHA. She has retired In her condition you know, dear, we must not let her keep late hours.

WASHINGTON. No, no—you are right. Give her my love.

MARTHA. Has there been no fighting to-day? We have heard no guns.

WASHINGTON. No: we let them go undisturbed. The Selectmen sent me a message begging that we would give General Howe no excuse for carrying out his threat to burn the town if his embarkation were molested. I replied that I could take no notice of assurances which, even if we accepted them, did not bind the British General. But the truth is, they were at no time very well within range of our guns, and they could have done much more harm to Boston than we could do to them. I confess I was a little sorry to let the Tories get off scot-free.

MARTHA. The Tories? Have they gone?

WASHINGTON. Why, yes—they have scuttled like rabbits. My glass showed me hundreds of civilians embarking, with boat-loads of their goods and chattels. Poor wretches! The decision to evacuate must have come upon them like the crack of doom.

MARTHA. Where do you think the British are going?

WASHINGTON. I anticipated—indeed I feared—that they would make for New York. But, strangely enough, they seemed to be heading northward. That may be only a ruse, however. Time will show.

MARTHA (*removing his plate*). Some cheese, my dear? (*Placing it before him.*)

WASHINGTON. Thank you, my love. (*Helping himself.*)

MARTHA. What of the state of health in Boston? We hear very bad reports of it.

WASHINGTON. Only men who have had the smallpox are to enter the town to-morrow. Fortunately, I am one of them.

MARTHA. Come now, George—don't pretend that you would have stayed behind, even if you had not undergone the disease.

WASHINGTON. The question does not arise, my dear. We need not discuss it.

MARTHA. And is this true that Jack was telling us yesterday, about the British having hired an army of Germans to do their dirty work for them?

WASHINGTON. Only too true, I fear.

MARTHA. And what does Your Excellency say to that? How stands your allegiance to the good King George?

WASHINGTON. It needed not this, my dear, to end my hopes of reconcilement. That was done by the wanton destruction of Falmouth and Norfolk—flaming arguments for our cause. But indeed I have ceased to regret the snapping of our ties to Britain. (*Goes to the door and calls.*) Captain Chandler?

THE OFFICER'S VOICE. Your Excellency?

WASHINGTON. Be good enough to bring me a little book—a pamphlet—that you will find in my saddle-bag. It is called "Common Sense."

THE OFFICER'S VOICE. I will, sir.

WASHINGTON. 'Tis a little book that was sent me some weeks ago.

MARTHA. I have heard it spoken of. They say 'tis from the pen of Dr. Franklin.

WASHINGTON. Others maintain that the author is Mr. John Adams. But they are all wrong—'tis the work of one

Thomas Paine, an Englishman. And 'tis well named "Common Sense."

The aide-de-camp salutes at the door, and hands WASHINGTON *the book.*

WASHINGTON. Thank you, sir.

The aide-de-camp salutes and retires. WASHINGTON *goes over to the fireplace, and stands in front of it, turning the leaves of the pamphlet.* MARTHA *seats herself in the armchair below the fireplace and resumes her knitting.*

WASHINGTON. This writer has convinced me that separation was inevitable, and left me only regretting that it should have come in anger.

MARTHA. I am glad, George, glad. I thank Mr. Paine for removing the one shade of difference between us.

WASHINGTON. Listen to this: "As to government matters, it is not in the power of Britain to do this continent justice. The business of it will soon be too weighty and intricate to be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience by a power so distant from us and so very ignorant of us."

MARTHA. That is the heart of the matter. People in England—those in power at any rate—are utterly ignorant of us, and think of us only to despise us.

WASHINGTON. And again: "Small islands, not capable of protecting themselves, are the proper objects for kingdoms to take under their care. There is something very absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet."

MARTHA. A very trenchant writer, this Mr. Paine.

WASHINGTON. As for England's alleged protection of our commerce, he says, very justly, that when European nations fall out, neutrality, for an American ship, will be a safer convoy than a man-of-war. And in another

place he asks what can be more absurd than to conceive three million people running to their sea-coast, every time a ship arrives from London, to know what portion of liberty they shall enjoy.

MARTHA. And the three million will one day be thirty millions—perhaps even more.

The aide-de-camp throws open the door and takes a step into the room.

OFFICER (*saluting*). The horses are ready, sir.

WASHINGTON. Thank you, so am I. (*Throws the pamphlet on the table.*) I will leave you this book, Martha—'tis worth your perusal. (*He crosses, puts on his sword, cloak and hat, then turns to her.*) And now——

MARTHA. One moment, General. I have something to show you, though I own I am a little timorous about it. (*The* OFFICER *is about to show his discretion by retiring—she turns to him and says*) Do not leave us, Captain Chandler. This may interest you, too. (*She is meanwhile lighting all the candles on the sideboard.*)

WASHINGTON. What is all this mystery? Why have you veiled the flag?

MARTHA. Why should an independent people—and you say you are now for independence—show the British Union in its colors?

WASHINGTON. Why indeed? I have cudgelled my brains to think of a fitting substitute.

MARTHA. What say you to this? (*She twitches away the veil and reveals the flag with the thirteen stars.*)

Pause.

WASHINGTON. So this is what you have plotted?

MARTHA. Mrs. Knox, Mrs. Mifflin, Eleanor and I.

WASHINGTON. One—two—three—thirteen stars! How did you hit upon the device?

MARTHA. Never mind how—'twas Mrs. Mifflin who thought of it.

WASHINGTON. What say you, Chandler?

OFFICER. 'Tis a brave flag to fight under, sir.

WASHINGTON (*reflectively*). Stars—and stripes! It has one great merit—there is no other flag like it.

MARTHA. Has it Your Excellency's approval?

WASHINGTON. Perhaps, my dear, your needle has been making history.

MARTHA. Her needle is woman's sword.

WASHINGTON. It shall be submitted to Congress. I shall urge its acceptance, I promise you. Meanwhile, I salute the Stars and Stripes.

He draws his sword and does so—the OFFICER *likewise.* MARTHA *folds her hands, bows her head, and seems to be whispering a prayer.*

Curtain.

SCENE FIFTH

Part I

The Eleventh of February 1778—*nearly two years later than the previous scene.*

A moonlight evening at Valley Forge. An open space: snow on the ground, and snow-clad trees R. *and* L. *A log hut slants half-way across the scene, backwards from front* L. *There is a door near the front; supposing it to be in the middle of the hut, only a little more than half of the hut is visible. Between the door and the back end, a square window closed by a rude shutter. The hut has a very shallow veranda; merely a prolongation of the eaves by some two feet, supported by three rough posts. A star-lit sky at the back indicates that the position is one of some height. From near the end of the hut an unseen path leads down to an unseen hollow, supposed to occupy the right-hand corner of the scene. Entrances along the front of the hut,* L., *and among the trees,* R.

All the soldiers in this scene are dressed in deplorable rags. One or two wear a sort of raw-hide brogues, others have their feet wrapped in clouts. Stockings they have none.

Private Benjamin Stone, *of New England, stands at the farther end of the veranda, looking down into the hollow.*

Ben. Say, Zeph, have you got the parlour fire a-goin' ?

Zephaniah Hollingsworth (*in the hollow, unseen*). She's just a-burnin' up. Them pine-cones is rare an' roziny.

Ben. Keep a place for me in the chimney-corner. I'm a-joinin' the Cinderella Squad to-night.

Zeph (*appearing up the slope*). You, Ben! You're a-dreamin'! I had the blanket last night—'tis your turn to-night.

BEN. I ain't fergettin'. But Dutch Hendrick's turr'ble bad to-night. Doctor says three or four hours'll finish him. An' maybe an extra blanket'll stop his teeth chitterin'.

ZEPH. What! Give up yer blanket to Dutchy! That low-down cuss!

BEN. 'Taint as I'm in love with him. Maybe he'll find himself warmer than he reckoned for afore the night's out. But he may as well die in comfort, the old sinner.

A crimson and wavering glow, mingled with cracklings, has meanwhile risen from below, back R.

MARTHA WASHINGTON, *with a small basket on her arm, escorted by* SERGEANT MAGRATH, *carrying a lantern, and followed by a negro man-servant carrying a large basket, enters, front* R. *The little group pauses unperceived by the soldiers.*

ZEPH (*putting his head in at the door of the hut*). Now then, the Cinderella Squad, tumble out! Who's for a front seat round the merry yule log?

PRIVATES PHIBBS, NICOLS, DUNPHY, HART *and two or three more, ragged and shivering, limp and crawl out of the hut, some carrying boxes, and others mere planks, to sit on.*

MARTHA. What does he mean, Sergeant, by the Cinderella Squad?

SERGEANT. Well, 'tis this way, Ma'am. Thim spalpeens of the Congress, God damn their sowls—(*checking himself in panic*)—axin' your pardon, Ma'am——

MARTHA. I didn't quite hear. I think you said "the honourable gentlemen of the Congress"——?

SERGEANT. That's it, Ma'am—that's what I said. The honourable gintlmen don't sind enough of blankets for to go round. So, bein' as wood's the one thing we has lashin's of, the bhoys do be lightin' bonfires in anny bit of a hollow that gives them shelter—(*Pointing off*) Ye can see them from here, Ma'am, all over the camp—an' some of them sits by the fireside, night an' night

about, while the lave o' them has the blankets. Cind'rella, I've heard tell, was a Princess of Oireland that had a fancy for toastin' her toes.

MARTHA. Poor fellows! May I speak to them?

SERGEANT. Sure 'tis the proud lads they'll be, Ma'am. (*Crossing to the hut.*) Stand to there, men! Here's the Gin'ral's lady herself come to visit you.

MARTHA *crosses. Some of the men are still in front of the hut, some are descending into the hollow. These turn back; all draw up in a rough line and salute.*

MARTHA. The General has invited me to Headquarters, my friends, to see for myself—— (*Interrupts herself.*) Give me the lantern, Sergeant. (*She holds it up in the face of one of the men.*) Why, surely I knew you at Morristown! You are Zephaniah Hollingsworth.

ZEPH (*steps forward and salutes*). The same, Ma'am.

MARTHA. Give me your hand, Zephaniah! I've not forgotten the day when you stopped my runaway horse.

ZEPH. 'Twas a small matter, Ma'am. I jest happened to be there.

MARTHA. They tell me you've happened to be there several other times when gallant things have been done. (*She hands back the lantern.*) Well, friends, the General asked me to come and see for myself the "incomparable patience and fidelity"—these are his own words—with which his brave fellows are bearing the hardships of this cruel winter. No need for me to tell you that the General has done, and is doing, his uttermost to make things easier for you.

SOLDIERS. { We know that, Ma'am.
'Tis that keeps the heart in us.
God bless him, Ma'am.

SERGEANT. 'Tis the great Commander we have, entoirely.

SOLDIERS. Aye, aye. (*Murmurs of assent.*)

NICOLS (*setting down the box he is carrying*). May I offer you a seat, Ma'am?

MARTHA (*seating herself*). I thank you, sir. (*To the others*) You have had much—far too much—to endure; but the worst, I hope, will soon be over. General Greene and General Wayne, you know, are out foraging in the Jerseys—be sure they will not come back empty-handed.

BEN. A little change of diet would be very acceptable, Ma'am, after fire-cake an' water for breakfast——

DUNPHY. Fire-cake an' water for dinner——

PHIBBS. Fire-cake an' water for supper——

HART. An' on Sundays a mush o' flour paste.

MARTHA. Trust me, the lean days are drawing to an end.

BEN. I dreamt last night of a porterhouse steak an' a noggin of rum.

DUNPHY. Glutton!

HART. Wine-bibber!

ZEPH. I dreamt of drawin' on a pair of good woollen stockings.

MARTHA *has beckoned to the negro, who has placed the large basket beside her and whipped off the canvas cover.*

MARTHA. There now! See how dreams come true! (*She takes a pair of grey stockings from the basket and holds them up.*)

HART. Holy Moses! 'tis a pair of stockin's!

DUNPHY. Is there such a thing in the wide world?

PHIBBS. Just let me feel of them, Ma'am. (*Strokes them down.*)

MARTHA. The General wrote me how his soldiers might be tracked in the snow by the blood from their bare feet; so I set the women of Virginia knitting. 'Twas little enough yarn we had; but we did what we could; and here is some of our handiwork. (*Distributes pairs of stockings.*)

ZEPH. God bless you, Ma'am.

HART. God bless you.

BEN. (*holding up stocking*). 'Tis the beautifullest thing in the world, a stockin'.

PHIBBS. There's but one beautifuller.

BEN. What's that?

PHIBBS. A pair! (*Holding them up.*)

BEN. True for you, Falsehoods.

MARTHA (*astonished*). Falsehoods? What do you mean?

BEN. Well, you see, Ma'am, his name's Phibbs, so we calls him Falsehoods for short.

ZEPH. If we only had shoes, now, we'd soon kick the red-coats out of Philadelphy.

DUNPHY. Raw-hide galligaskins are better 'n nuthin'. (*Exhibiting his own.*)

BEN. Hark at his pride!

ZEPH. And Agag walked delicately.

DR. ALBIGENCE WALDO *enters from the left, along the front of the hut.*

DR. WALDO. You here, Madam!

MARTHA. As you see, Dr. Waldo. I brought with me a few little comforts for our brave lads, and I have been distributing some of them.

The SOLDIERS *hold up their stockings.*

DR. WALDO. Ha, capital, capital!

MARTHA. And I was coming on to your quarters with a little wine and some cordials for the sick.

DR. WALDO. I have some patients here—frost-bite—fever and ague—pleurisy——

MARTHA. Surely this is not a hospital hut.

DR. WALDO. The hospital huts are packed like herring-casks, Madam. (*To the men*) How is Dutchy to-night?

BEN. Mighty bad, Doctor.

DUNPHY. Nearly all in, I reckon.

DR. WALDO. Well, I must have a look at him. (*At door.*)

MARTHA. May I come with you, Doctor?

DR. WALDO. 'Tis scarcely a scene for ladies, Madam.

MARTHA. Fie, Doctor! There are no ladies here. I am simply a soldier's wife.

DR. WALDO. If you insist, Madam—— (*To* SOLDIERS) Throw open that window, men. (*To* MARTHA) You will find the air stifling.

MARTHA. I am not one of the women who faint, Doctor.

They go into the hut, the SERGEANT *and the negro following. The* SOLDIERS *have thrown back the shutter of the unglazed window, revealing a faint gleam of candle-light within.*

DUNPHY. Is there water in them kittles, Falsehoods?

PHIBBS (*trying them*). Full up.

DUNPHY. Bring 'em along then. We must wash our feet afore we puts our stockin's on.

He himself picks up a tin pan. PHIBBS *and* NICOLS *each take a camp-kettle, and they go down to the fire, followed by* HART, *who limps badly. The fire is now throwing out a steady glow.* BEN. *and* ZEPH. *stay behind, looking in at the window.*

ZEPH. Not much o' the fine madam about her, Ben.

BEN. She has a kind heart. But why should I have to thank her kind heart for the first pair o' stockin's I've seen since the Brandywine? Ain't there no sech thing as a Quartermaster-General? What's come o' the blasted commissariat? What about them gutsy devils of Congressmen, fillin' their God-damn bellies, an' leavin' us to——

ZEPH. Whisht, whisht, man! Mind the General's order about "the foolish and wicked habit of profane swearing."

BEN. I'd bet my shirt—if I had one—that the General says a damn or two himself every time he thinks o' Congress!

ZEPH. (*looking in at the window*). Sh! She's kneelin' beside Dutchy's pallet! She's prayin'.

ZEPH. and BEN. take off their hats. A low murmur of prayer proceeds from the hut, and a moment afterwards the men around the fire are heard singing:

The day is broke, my boys, push on,
And follow, follow Washington,
'Tis he that leads the way, my boys,
'Tis he that leads the way.

When he commands we will obey,
Through rain or sun, by night or day,
Determined to be free, my boys,
Determined to be free.

At the end of the song, the prayer continues for a moment, ZEPH. and BEN. listening reverently. Then they say "Amen" and put on their hats.

BEN. Fancy prayin' fer Dutchy! 'Tis a waste of good religion.

ZEPH. Who knows? Maybe, when the time comes, some one may be fool enough to think of prayin' fer *you*, ye reprobate.—Huh! snow again!

Flakes of snow begin to sift down. MARTHA comes out of the hut, followed, as before, by the negro and the SERGEANT.

MARTHA. Will you take me to another hut, Sergeant?

SERGEANT. That I will, Ma'am.

MARTHA (*speaking back into the hut*). Good night, men. God bless you!

VOICES WITHIN. Good night, Ma'am. Good night.

MARTHA (*seeing* ZEPH. *and* BEN.). Good night, Zephaniah. Good night.

ZEPH. AND BEN. Good night, Ma'am, an' thanks t'you, Ma'am.

MARTHA and her escort go out, front L. DR. WALDO *comes from the hut.*

BEN. Is there any chance for Dutchy, Doctor?

DR. WALDO. Dutchy passed away while Lady Washington was praying [*Follows* MARTHA *out.*

BEN. (*after watching his departure*). Glory be! I can have my blanket again.

He hastens into the hut. ZEPH. *turns towards the fire. The snow drifts down. Another verse of the song begins as*

The Curtain falls.

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SCENE FIFTH

Part II

The Fifth of May, 1778—*seven weeks later than Part I.*

The same scene, on a bright spring morning. All the snow has gone. A sort of tribune, not more than a foot from the ground, has been erected at the back, facing to the right. The railings are draped with the Stars and Stripes. A flagstaff at each end of the tribune.

Washington *stands on the tribune, with his Generals around him*—Benedict Arnold, Nathanael Greene, Benjamin Lincoln, Lord Stirling, Anthony Wayne. Martha Washington, Mrs. Greene, Lady Stirling, Mrs. Knox *are seated in front of the hut,* L. *Down* R. *are a number of officers and men.*

Washington (*addressing the unseen troops below the tribune*). Men of the American Army, you all know the reason of our assembling to-day. After a winter of bitter hardship, bravely endured, a springtide of rejoicing has come to us. It has pleased the Almighty Ruler of the Universe to defend the cause of the United American States, and finally to raise up a powerful friend among the princes of the earth, to establish our liberty and independence on a lasting foundation. A treaty of mutual aid and alliance has been signed between our Government and His Majesty King Louis the Sixteenth of France. (*A great outburst of cheering.*) That treaty has been negotiated by our great and famous countryman, Dr. Franklin. (*Loud cheering.*) One article in it, I may tell you, binds us to accept no accommodation with Great Britain, short of absolute independence.

(*More cheering.*) Soldiers and comrades, I would not have you think that the struggle is over. There is much yet to be done, and it may be that days of darkness and discouragement still lie before us. But with the aid of the great Navy and the gallant soldiers of France, we cannot fail of ultimate success. Three cheers for the French Alliance!

He raises his hat and starts the cheering, in which all join, the ladies standing up. The white flag of France and the Stars and Stripes are run up on the flagstaffs. A salute of thirteen guns (one for each State) is fired, and a feu de joie is heard, running off into the distance. A band strikes up some appropriate French air. (It does not appear that pre-revolution France had any recognized National Anthem.) The Generals all come down from the tribune, and mingle with the other officers and ladies on the scene. A great deal of animated conversation goes on. As the noise of the firing and cheering dies down, WASHINGTON *brings a limping soldier up to* MARTHA, *who is now in the centre of the scene.*

WASHINGTON. Let me present to you, my dear, one of the most skilful and intrepid soldiers of our country—General Benedict Arnold. General Arnold—Mrs. Washington. (*Curtsy and bow.*)

MARTHA. 'Tis an honour to make your acquaintance, General Arnold. I know how much we all owe you, and how highly my husband esteems your services.

ARNOLD. I am proud to hear you say so, Madam.

MARTHA. But I fear your wound still troubles you.

ARNOLD. When a man has had his leg twice broken, Madam —once above the knee——

WASHINGTON. —at Quebec——

ARNOLD. —and once below the knee——

WASHINGTON. —at Saratoga——

ARNOLD. —doubtless his dancing days are over.

WASHINGTON. But not his fighting days. General Arnold, my dear, would ever be in the hottest corner, even if he had no legs at all, and, like the man in the ballad, had to fight upon his stumps.

A LIEUTENANT, *followed by two soldiers, dragging between them a man in civil dress, enters in front* R., *makes his way through the crowd, and comes up to* WASHINGTON.

LIEUTENANT (*saluting*). We have caught a Tory spy, Your Excellency. He was trying to sneak off through our lines, with these notes of our strength and dispositions upon him. (*Hands* WASHINGTON *papers—he glances at them.*)

WASHINGTON (*to the* SPY). What have you to say, sir?

THE SPY. I reckon, General, there's not much to be said. I am a Loyalist, and I'm proud of it.

A great burst of cheering and of music behind the scenes.

WASHINGTON (*after a pause*). On any other day, sir, you should have gone straight before a court-martial. But to-day I am disposed to let you go free—on one condition.

THE SPY. What is that, sir?

WASHINGTON (*tearing up the papers*). That you go straight to Philadelphia and tell General Howe all that you have seen and heard. Release him, men.

They do so. The crowd laugh and applaud. The SPY *slinks off, down* R. *The music swells louder as*

The Curtain falls.

SCENE SIXTH

The Seventh of October, 1780—*two and a half years later than the previous scene.*

The room at Mount Vernon, as in Scenes II. and III.

Late afternoon.

MARTHA WASHINGTON *and* ELEANOR CUSTIS *are superintending the evening meal of* ELEANOR'S *two little girls,* ELIZABETH, *aged four years and two months, and* MARTHA, *aged two years and nine months. The elder sits in a high chair, the younger in the lap of a fat negro mammy,* CHLOE *by name.* CULLY, *now very old, stands in the background. The meal is just over.*

ELEANOR. Now, Betsy dear, you've had quite enough. Just finish your milk and fold up your bib. (*The child drinks, plucks off its bib, and tries to fold it,* ELEANOR *helping.*)

MARTHA (*patting the cheeks of the younger child*). There's a plump little Patsy! I hope all Grandad's soldier-boys have had as good a supper as thou.

ELEANOR (*to the elder child*). Now—"For what we have received——"

THE CHILD. "—make us tooly sankful."

ELEANOR (*lifts her out of her chair*). There now—say good night to Granny, and off to bye-bye.

The child runs up to MARTHA, *who picks her up, kisses her, and says good night, after whatever fashion she pleases.*

CULLY. Come 'long, Missy Betsy.

He takes the child's hand and leads her to the door. Meanwhile CHLOE *has held up the little one to be*

kissed, first by MARTHA, *then by* ELEANOR. *She carries her to the door, takes the elder child's hand from* CULLY, *and they go off.* CULLY *gathers the children's supper things on a tray and totters off with it.*

MARTHA (*who has taken up her knitting by the window*). They *are* good, the darlings.

ELEANOR (*also knitting*). I wish their Daddy could see them. He has been nearly a year now on the General's staff.

MARTHA (*dropping her knitting in her lap*). And it's getting on for six years since my old man has seen his own home.

ELEANOR. Mother—you have not been quite yourself these days. You are not alarmed, surely, by the rumours that have been flying about?

MARTHA. Alarmed, dear? No. But the reports have been very odd. They don't speak of a battle, and still less of any disaster—only of something vague and strange.

ELEANOR. What was the date of your last letter from my father-in-law?

MARTHA. September the 17th—nearly three weeks ago.

ELEANOR. Doubtless he has been too busy for correspondence.

MARTHA. Oh, I am not anxious about *him*. He has an unseen bodyguard around him, until his work is done. But the war drags on and on. We thought the end was near when Burgoyne surrendered—but no! The French Alliance, from which we hoped so much, has led to little but trouble. There is no money in the country that will buy anything. People are using dollar bills for curl-papers. Charleston has capitulated to Clinton. Cornwallis has beaten Gates at Camden. A barbarous war is wasting the Carolinas. 'Twould be more than human if one had not moments of depression.

ELEANOR. My father-in-law would reprove you, mother.

MARTHA. Your father-in-law has never seen me falter. But he, too, is human, my dear. More than once has he said to me: "Could you bear to leave your dear Virginia, Martha? What if we had to seek peace and freedom in the wilderness beyond the Ohio?"

ELEANOR (*lays her hand on* MARTHA's). My dear mother!

CULLY *enters hastily from the back.*

CULLY. Ma lady! Missy El'nor! Dere's a soldier-man a-gallopin' across de paddock. Dey say 'tis Mas'r John!

MARTHA (*at window*). Eleanor, you have younger eyes.

ELEANOR. Yes, it is John! Oh, mother, what news does he bring? (*She hurries out along the piazza.*)

MARTHA. Tell cook to hasten the supper, Cully. Whatever news he brings, Master John must be hungry after his ride.

CULLY. Sartin' sho', ma lady. A'll bid cook stir her stumps!

He lingers, however, obviously anxious to hear what JOHN *has to say.*

After a moment ELEANOR *enters, back, leading in* JOHN, *who is in uniform, with riding-boots and cloak.*

ELEANOR. No bad news, mother!

CULLY. Praise de Lo'd! [*Exit.*

JOHN. Nor good news either—precisely. (*Embraces and kisses his mother.*)

MARTHA. You are very mysterious, John.

JOHN. And how are the babes?

ELEANOR. As fat as dumplings——

MARTHA. And as good as gold.

JOHN (*towards the door*). Mayn't I——?

ELEANOR. Wait a minute. Chloe is just putting them to bed.

MARTHA. Let us have your tidings first, my son. Sit here. (*She draws him down on a couch, front* L. ELEANOR *stands with her arm on his shoulder.*)

JOHN. 'Pon my word, I scarce know where to begin. I warn you 'twill take your breath away.

MARTHA. Suppose you begin at the beginning.

JOHN. Do you remember, five years ago, in this very room, I said we should hear more of Benedict Arnold?

MARTHA. And so we have—a great deal more.

JOHN. But not all—not by a long way. What is the last you heard of him?

MARTHA. Why, that the General had made him Commandant of West Point.

JOHN. Of our great fortress and arsenal, with a garrison of three thousand men. Well, what should you say if this same Benedict Arnold, the General's most admired and trusted officer, had sold West Point to the enemy!

MARTHA. Sold——! What do you mean?

JOHN. Betrayed it!

ELEANOR. Betrayed West Point!

MARTHA. But, John—you said the news was not bad!

JOHN. No more it is—for the sale came to nought. The betrayal—the dastardly crime—failed!

MARTHA. Oh, thank God for that! Thank God! Thank God! (*She hides her face on her son's shoulder and sobs.*)

JOHN (*caressing her*). Mother, Mother! I assure you all is well! By the strangest accident, the plot was utterly foiled.

ELEANOR. And Arnold? What of him?

JOHN. That's the worst of the affair—he escaped to a British ship, and is safe in New York.

MARTHA (*looking up*). To think that he should be such a villain! He, that had done such gallant things!

JOHN. It seems you can be a traitor without being a coward.

ELEANOR (*taking a chair at the end of the couch, beside her husband*). But how was the plot discovered, John?

JOHN. Well, you see, the British agent all along was one Major André——

ELEANOR. The André who directed all the Meschianza tomfooleries at Philadelphia?

JOHN. The very man. This André, you see, passed our lines in disguise, calling himself John Anderson, and had a meeting with Arnold. They consulted for several hours, and planned all the details of the villainy. Arnold actually set down the whole scheme in his own handwriting, and André concealed the papers in his boots. Then he set off back to New York, carrying a pass signed by Arnold himself, stating that "John Anderson" was travelling "on public business."

MARTHA. "Public business" indeed!

JOHN. André had almost reached the British lines when he fell in with three of our militia-men. If he had simply shown his pass, they would have let him go—they said so.

MARTHA. And why did he not?

JOHN. Because of a miraculous chance. One of our men had been a prisoner in New York, and had escaped only three days before, in the uniform of a Hessian soldier. André, seeing the green uniform, thought he was among friends.

MARTHA. Yes—and then?

JOHN. He declared himself to be a British officer!

MARTHA (*a long sigh of relief*). Ah!

JOHN. The men searched him, found his British regimentals under a civilian great-coat, and extracted Arnold's papers from the heels of his boots.

MARTHA. So that one Hessian uniform saved West Point and saved America!

JOHN. That, and nothing else.

MARTHA. And people say there is no Providence!

ELEANOR. But how did Arnold escape?

JOHN. By the blunder of an idiot. André tried hard to buy himself off, but our fellows were staunch, and handed him over to one Colonel Jamison, at the nearest American post. What must this egregious Jamison do but send a despatch to Arnold telling of André's arrest, and saying that he had forwarded the papers to His Excellency.

MARTHA. He must have been a traitor himself.

JOHN. No—only a born fool. Jamison's letter was handed to Arnold while he was at breakfast with some of the General's staff. He never turned a hair, but went on talking as though nothing had happened.

MARTHA. He has nerves of iron.

JOHN. Presently he made an excuse and left the room. His wife followed him, and, soon after, the officers thought they heard a cry, but paid no attention. Arnold had told her the truth—she had shrieked and fainted—and he, leaving her insensible, had fled.

MARTHA. Was she—Mrs. Arnold—in the villainy?

JOHN. The General believes—nay, he is sure—that she was not.

ELEANOR. I am glad of that. With all her flightiness, there was good in Elizabeth Shippen.

MARTHA. But the General, John? How did he take it?

JOHN. He was wonderful, mother. I was with him when he received the news. He was as calm as though it had been an invitation to dinner. He hurried Colonel Hamilton off in pursuit of Arnold, and sent out orders countermanding his treacherous displacements of the troops at West Point. Then Lafayette came in. The General turned to him and said: "Arnold is a traitor,

and has fled to the British. Whom can we trust?" There was a break in his voice, and I saw tears roll down his cheeks.

There is a pause. MARTHA *dries her eyes.*

MARTHA. And André? What of him?

JOHN (*speaking with reluctance*). He was tried by court-martial at Tappan—just a week ago. General Greene was President of the Court, and Lafayette, Von Steuben and a dozen other Generals were the judges.

MARTHA. And—the result?

JOHN. He was sentenced to death as a spy.

MARTHA. And then——?

JOHN. Next morning—he was hanged. (*He sits with his hands clasped in front of him gazing at the ground.*)

ELEANOR. Why, John, you speak as if you pitied him!

JOHN. I do, Eleanor, I do. So did every one that witnessed his conduct at his trial, and—after. 'Twas the strangest scene that ever was. All the high officers of the army, excepting the General himself, attended—not to gloat over the fate of an enemy, but rather as though to do honour to a brave gentleman. Melancholy and gloom pervaded all ranks. The scene was affectingly awful. He went to his death without bravado, but without a tremour.

ELEANOR. But he had been found out in an act of treachery!

MARTHA. 'Tis one of the saddest things in war, my daughter, that 'tis the duty of one side to foster treachery in the other.

JOHN. I am glad you see it like that, mother. You will find that the General agrees. He bade me, first to tell my story, and then to give you this brief letter—all he had time to write.

He hands her a letter. MARTHA *opens it eagerly and runs through it, the others watching her.*

MARTHA. He says: "André has met his fate with that fortitude which was to be expected from an accomplished man and a gallant officer."

JOHN. That is the sentiment of every one. Colonel Hamilton is of opinion that André's petition to be shot instead of hanged might have been granted. But just because he aroused so much sympathy, the General felt it his duty to adhere to the letter of the law.

MARTHA. But what does this mean, John? The General writes: "How far Arnold meant to involve me in the catastrophe does not appear by any indubitable evidence; and I am rather inclined to think that he did not wish to hazard the more important object of his treachery by attempting to combine two events." What "two events"? What does he mean?

JOHN. Why this: that if the plot had succeeded, 'tis at least an even chance that the General himself might have been captured in the fortress.

ELEANOR. Great heavens!

MARTHA. My George in British hands! that would have been the end of all things. On the brink of what a precipice have we been standing!

ELEANOR. You may well say, mother, that my father has an unseen bodyguard around him.

MARTHA. Until his work is done! (*Rising.*) And now, John, come and look at your babies. *Takes his arm and moves towards the door as*

The Curtain falls.

SCENE SEVENTH

The Fifth of November 1781—*a year later than the previous scene.*

A corridor in COLONEL BURWELL BASSETT'S *house at Eltham, Virginia. It is a shallow scene: only one wall is visible, with a large double door in the centre, and on each side of the door a settee against the wall. Above each settee is a sconce with two lighted candles; and high above the sconces hang the heads and antlers of two stags. In front of the settee to the right is a small table. The light is dim throughout.*

One wing of the door is opened noiselessly, and DR. CRAIK *enters, followed by* MRS. BASSETT (MARTHA'S *sister* FANNY), *now a middle-aged lady. She closes the door gently. They talk in low tones.*

MRS. BASSETT. Is there anything else we can do, Doctor?

DR. CRAIK. Nothing, I fear, Madam. You must induce young Mrs. Custis to eat something and to rest.

MRS. BASSETT. Poor Eleanor! All these two weeks she has scarce moved from her husband's bedside.

DR. CRAIK. She cannot help now, Madam. For her children's sake, you must persuade her to bear up.

MARTHA *enters,* L., *a candle with a glass funnel in her hand, and some linen over her arm.*

MARTHA. Here are the towels, Fanny. (*Seeing the doctor.*) Ah, Doctor,—you are not leaving us?

DR. CRAIK. No, Madam. I will stay with you, until——

MARTHA. Until——?

DR. CRAIK. Until the end.

Pause. MRS. BASSETT *takes the candle and towels, and places them on the table, while* MARTHA *gazes petrified in the* DOCTOR'S *face.*

MARTHA. There is no hope?

DR. CRAIK. Your son is unconscious, Madam. He is past all suffering. He will soon join the host of brave men who have saved our country. (*He re-enters the sick-room.*)

MARTHA *throws herself into her sister's arms, weeping bitterly.*

MRS. BASSETT. My poor, poor Martha!

MARTHA. I had but two children, and this is the last.

MRS. BASSETT. You have your grandchildren, Martha, and you are the wife of George Washington. Be brave, my sister; you are blessèd among women.

MARTHA. To think what a time of triumph this would have been, if only John could have shared in it!

MRS. BASSETT. He did share in it, Martha. He saw the great surrender.

MARTHA. With dying eyes. (*Slight pause.*) But you are right, Fanny. He dies for his country, and I am blessèd among women. If only my George were here. (*She takes up the towels and turns to the sick-room.*)

MRS. BASSETT. Eleanor must be made to eat something. I will bring a tray——

MARTHA (*at the door*). Do, sister. [*Exit.*

MRS. BASSETT *takes up the candle, and is going off* R., *when she starts back with a little scream, and then holds up the candle in the face of* GEORGE WASHINGTON, *who enters silently. He wears his cloak, and has evidently been riding hard.*

MRS. BASSETT. Why, George! How you startled me!

WASHINGTON. Dr. Craik sent me an express. I have ridden thirty miles without a halt.

MRS. BASSETT. Martha was just longing to have you here.

WASHINGTON. Well? What of John?

MRS. BASSETT. The doctor says there is no hope. He is unconscious.

WASHINGTON. Poor fellow! Poor Martha!

MRS. BASSETT. Now that you are here, the worst is over for her. But my heart bleeds for Eleanor.

WASHINGTON. A good girl. But she loses her husband in victory. She must think of the thousand others who, in hours of defeat and despair, have lost all that was dear to them.

MRS. BASSETT. Shall I tell Martha?

WASHINGTON. Pray do so.

He places his hat on the table, takes off his cloak and throws it on the settee, R. MRS. BASSETT *opens the sick-room door and beckons.* MARTHA *comes out.* MRS. BASSETT *slips into the room and closes the door.*

MARTHA (*runs up to her husband and embraces him*). George, George! Thank heaven you are here! Have you heard?

WASHINGTON. I have heard, Martha. 'Tis a sore trial for you, my dear wife. (*He leads her over to the settee,* L., *and they sit.*)

MARTHA. Was I too proud and happy, George? Has this been sent as a punishment for vainglory?

WASHINGTON. Hush, Martha dear. You did right to be glad. And even had you done wrong, Heaven does not punish us at the expense of others.

MARTHA. Then why——?

WASHINGTON. Let us not ask why. We only know that we cannot know. We must be resolute and endure.

MARTHA. And is all well, George? Is the war indeed over?

WASHINGTON. Not over, my dear—perhaps not by months or years. But after Yorktown, I think our cause is secure. You and I, Martha, will not lay our bones in the wastes beyond the Ohio, but in our dear Virginia——

MARTHA. Beside our dear dead. (*Pause.*) Tell me, George, when were you first aware of John's sickness?

WASHINGTON. He was at my side when I put the match to the first gun of the bombardment; and he then seemed very well. That was on the 9th of October, nearly a month ago. It was two, or perhaps three, days later that I saw he was unfit for duty and ordered him into hospital. I happened to be at his bedside at ten in the morning of the 17th, when the enemy beat a parley. You should have seen how he brightened up; for we all knew what that meant. Then you know what he did on the day of the surrender——

MARTHA. He insisted on being carried out——?

WASHINGTON. Yes—to see General O'Hara give up his sword—for Cornwallis, you know, was sick. I reproved him when I saw him; but he smiled and said, "I had to tell Mother that I had been in at the death."

MARTHA (*weeping*). My poor boy! My poor boy!

WASHINGTON. That very day I sent him here, to Eltham—and you know the rest.

MARTHA. Oh, George, he has not been a bad son to you—tell me that!

WASHINGTON. Had he been my own, my dear, I could scarce have loved him more.

The door is thrown open, and ELEANOR *appears, weeping, dishevelled, eager.*

ELEANOR. Oh, Mother, his eyes are open! He is conscious. He whispered, "The General."

Both wings of the door are opened, and the dying man can be seen on a small, low bed, the DOCTOR *sitting at his right side,* MRS. BASSETT *standing opposite.* WASHINGTON *rises, comes a step forward, and turns to face the sick-room.*

WASHINGTON. Shall I——?

DR. CRAIK (*rises and comes forward*). I think he wishes to see you, General.

WASHINGTON goes up and takes the chair in which the DOCTOR *has been seated.* MARTHA *follows and stands behind him.* ELEANOR *joins* MRS. BASSETT *on the other side of the bed, and clings to her, weeping.* JOHN *feebly moves his right hand, which* WASHINGTON *takes.*

JOHN (*barely audible*). General!

WASHINGTON. My dear boy! (*Stoops and kisses his forehead.*)

JOHN. Good-bye! (*Feebly moving both hands*) Mother! Eleanor! kiss the babes!

MARTHA *and* ELEANOR *kneel, one at each side of the bed, and take his hands. He tries to raise his head, but it drops back. His eyes close and his mouth falls open. A pause. The* DOCTOR *goes up to him and touches his eyes.*

DR. CRAIK. All is over.

A pause.

WASHINGTON. Martha!

He lays his hand on her shoulder and helps her to rise. She throws herself into his arms. He stands looking down at the dead man.

Curtain.

SCENE EIGHTH

The Second of December 1799—*eighteen years later than the previous scene.* GEORGE WASHINGTON *and* MARTHA, *aged sixty-seven.*

The room at Mount Vernon. The furniture and pictures are a good deal altered. Portraits of WASHINGTON *and of* MARTHA *on the walls. The gathering twilight of a winter day.*

LADY FAIRFAX, *a middle-aged woman, and her daughter of twenty-five, both wearing winter wraps, are standing with* MARTHA WASHINGTON *before the fire, evidently in the act of taking leave.*

LADY FAIRFAX. It has been an honour no less than a pleasure, Madam, to be received in your beautiful home.

MARTHA. The name of Fairfax, my lady, is never spoken without affection at Mount Vernon.

LADY FAIRFAX. But for the satisfaction he promised himself in seeing the General, I doubt whether my lord would ever have returned from Europe.

MARTHA. The late lord was, and your husband is, among the dearest of the General's friends.

LORD FAIRFAX *and* GEORGE WASHINGTON *enter.* FAIRFAX *is about* WASHINGTON'S *age. His dress denotes without emphasizing, the clergyman. He carries a heavy great-coat over his arm.*

FAIRFAX. The coach is not yet here, my love. There is time, before we leave, for the General to show you and Julia his greenhouse, which, I assure you, is worth a visit.

LADY FAIRFAX. Oh, will you be so good, General?

WASHINGTON. With great pleasure, my lady.

LADY FAIRFAX. Will not you come too, Bryan?

FAIRFAX. Pray excuse me—I have something to say in private to Mrs. Washington.

LADY FAIRFAX. Ah, I see—you have planned to get rid of us!

FAIRFAX. Precisely, my love.

LADY FAIRFAX. Can we permit this, General?

WASHINGTON. Perhaps I, too, may have secrets to impart to your ladyship.

LADY FAIRFAX. Ah—you are in the plot?

WASHINGTON. On my honour, no; but I embrace the opportunity.

LADY FAIRFAX *and* JULIA *go out with* WASHINGTON, *laughing.*

MARTHA (*seated*). What is this secret, my Lord?

FAIRFAX. Not "my Lord," I beg. That is all very well in England, but in Virginia I am still Parson Fairfax; to you and your husband, I hope, plain Bryan.

MARTHA. Well, Bryan, what is it you wish to tell me?

FAIRFAX. I want to tell you, and I want you to tell him, in what esteem and reverence George Washington is held in England. Wherever I came, 'twas my chief title to interest and respect that I was your husband's friend.

MARTHA. They bear no malice?

FAIRFAX. The British, my dear Martha, whatever else they may be, are not a rancorous people. Even during the war they saw in him a chivalrous and indomitable Captain. Since the war, they have seen him ignoring temptations such as few men in his place could have withstood,——

MARTHA. To him they were no temptations.

FAIRFAX. True; because vulgar ambition is foreign to his nature. He has built up a new nation with a wisdom and a selflessness as yet unknown to history; and the British, however sore they may be over their defeat, regard the great man who accomplished it, not with resentment, but with pride.

MARTHA. And you, Bryan? Are you reconciled to all that has happened?

FAIRFAX. I still deplore the severance; but I see that it was inevitable. And I am almost consoled when I reflect that, at the height of our political divergence, there was never any estrangement of heart between me and your husband.

MARTHA. I understand, Bryan, why you say all this to me, and not to George; for he is not one who loves to hear his own praises. But I think you two old friends ought to speak without reserve as to your political sentiments.

WASHINGTON *returns with the ladies.*

WASHINGTON. Are we indiscreet? Do we return too soon?

MARTHA. I have been telling Bryan, George, that he should not hesitate to talk of politics with you, but should tell you just how far he accepts the—the——

WASHINGTON. —the new order of things? Indeed, old friend, you may speak without reserve.

FAIRFAX. Well, George, this is what I feel: I shall never cease to regret the quarrel and the war; but I see that they were forced upon you by great unwisdom on the other side.

WASHINGTON. If you see that, I know not what difference there is between us.

FAIRFAX. Ever since I read your Farewell Address three years ago, I have felt that this Commonwealth is not only a new thing in the world, but a great thing; and 'tis you who have brought it into being.

WASHINGTON. With many valiant helpers. Alone, for example, I should scarce have won the day against the sectionalism which would have made of us thirteen separate provinces in place of one great Nation. 'Twas Mr. Hamilton who fought that arduous battle.

MARTHA. You say so, my dear; but what could Mr. Hamilton have done without you?

FAIRFAX. Truly, late events have vindicated his and your wisdom. The trouble with France would scarce have blown over bloodlessly, had she had a disunited America to deal with.

LADY FAIRFAX. What would you have done, Mrs. Washington, had His Excellency been forced to take the field again?

MARTHA. I should have thanked God that he had still the strength to serve his country.

FAIRFAX. Perhaps this young General Buonapartë, of whom we hear so much, would have been sent to Louisiana instead of to Egypt.

WASHINGTON. If I judge the young man aright, he would have proved a tougher antagonist than General Howe or my Lord Cornwallis. But since Admiral Nelson has destroyed the French fleet, I do not see how he is ever to get out of Egypt again.

FAIRFAX. You have not heard the latest news?

WASHINGTON. What news?

FAIRFAX. Why, Buonapartë has left his army in Egypt, and arrived in Paris—alone!

WASHINGTON. Alone! He has deserted his army! Surely that must be the end of his career.

A negro servant in livery appears at the back.

THE SERVANT. His Lo'dship's ca'age am at de do'! [*Exit.*

LADY FAIRFAX. Good-bye, dear Mrs. Washington. We must see you at Mounteagle before long.

MARTHA. Not till the spring, I fear, Lady Fairfax.

FAIRFAX. Good-bye, George.

WASHINGTON. Good-bye, Bryan. 'Tis good to have you with us once more.

FAIRFAX. With you in every sense, old friend.

General farewells: WASHINGTON *and* MARTHA *accompany their guests out. Meanwhile dusk has fallen, and the negro servant brings in two candlesticks, which he places on the table. He goes out.* MARTHA *returns and seats herself in the corner of the settee nearest the fire. She has taken up her work-basket and begins to knit. Presently* WASHINGTON *enters, takes up a newspaper from the table, and sits in the other corner of the settee.*

WASHINGTON (*puts on his spectacles and is beginning to read, when he lets the paper fall in his lap, and says reflectively*). Would that all our guests were like that faithful friend, Tory though he was in his day.

MARTHA. Indeed, dear George, we are too seldom alone——

WASHINGTON. —in this well-resorted tavern of ours.

MARTHA. But if you wanted solitude, you should not have saved your country—you should not have created the United States.

WASHINGTON. I did not create them, my dear—I only helped the native good sense of the people to reject the counsels of selfishness and cowardice.

MARTHA. Whatever you did, 'twas what no one else could do. You cannot complain if people come from far and near to show their respect for you.

WASHINGTON. Would not the word "curiosity" answer as well?

MARTHA. No—they come out of respect for you, and curiosity to see me—the plain little wife of the great man.

WASHINGTON (*taking off and laying down his spectacles*). You jest, my dear Patsy. I think it was in foresight of the lot reserved for me that Heaven took care to provide me with the helpmeet I required.

MARTHA. If I have not helped you, George, at least I have striven to be no hindrance to you.

WASHINGTON. Your courage—your serenity—has helped me in every turn of the game—in defeat no less than in victory—most of all, I think, in the black days of Morristown and Valley Forge.

MARTHA (*laying her hand on his*). Dear George, if I have indeed done anything, these words are my rich reward.

WASHINGTON. Do you know what I have often thought? They were fools and criminals who would have had me proclaim myself king—but you would have made a very stately little queen—Lady Washington.

MARTHA. Now it is you who jest. There have been Queen Marys enough and to spare; but who ever heard of a Queen Martha?

WASHINGTON. Queen Martha sounds quite as well as Queen Anne, on whose dignity the Lord Fairfax of my youth used to descant.

MARTHA. Is it not strange to think, George, how sad has been the lot of kings and queens in our time? The name of Washington has been one of evil omen to them.

WASHINGTON. Ah, my dear, it was not the loss of the Thirteen Colonies that drove King George mad: it was because his mind was unsound that he lost the Thirteen Colonies.

MARTHA. And then the unhappy King and Queen of France! With what fervour we used to drink the health of His Most Christian Majesty! Poor things—we brought little health to them.

WASHINGTON. Come, come, my dear—I hope you are not laying their fate at my door.

MARTHA. Not their end, certainly, but the beginning of their downfall. Did not the good Lafayette, in offering you, as he said, "the tribute" of the French Revolution, call it the offspring of ours?

WASHINGTON. 'Tis true that, could Marie Antoinette have foreseen '89, she might not have been so eager in '79 to help us set up a Republic.

MARTHA. I can't bear to think of their end, and the fate of the poor little Dauphin. Do you remember our *feu de joie* at Newburg in honour of his birth?

WASHINGTON. Yes, we have lived to see great tragedies on the European stage. Let us be thankful for the ocean that secures us, both from tyranny and from the vengeance that attends it.

MARTHA. And then the King of Sweden, murdered in his own capital! Of one thing we may be sure—no President chosen by the people of the United States will ever be assassinated.

WASHINGTON. One would indeed hold it unthinkable. But I should feel greater confidence had I never been President.

MARTHA. Well, all these wranglings and janglings—Toryism, Federalism, Republicanism—have nothing to say to us now. Your prayer has been granted, and you can henceforth lead the peaceful life of a planter on our dear Virginian tide-waters.

WASHINGTON. Under my own vine and fig-tree, no man making me afraid. It is true, Patsy dear; I am thankful to Heaven; and when the call comes for me, I shall be ready.

MARTHA. The call——?

WASHINGTON. The call of a greater President than Mr. Adams.

MARTHA. Now you know, George, that you entered into an engagement with Mr. Morris and General Knox, not to leave the theatre of this world before the century was out.

WASHINGTON. I shall do my best, believe me, to keep that engagement; but you remember what the Scottish poet says: "The best laid plans of mice and men——"

MARTHA. Yes, dear George, yes: let us not talk lightly of death. The twilight is gathering round us, and we will pass into it together.

WASHINGTON. I think I must tell you of a strange dream I had not long ago. I cannot quite shake off the disquietude it caused me.

MARTHA. Let me help you, dear, to shake it off.

WASHINGTON. First, then, remember that, if dreams mean anything, 'tis oftentimes the contrary of what they seem to indicate.

MARTHA. I know that 'tis said so.

WASHINGTON. I dreamed, then, that you and I were sitting together, as we are now, conversing upon the happy life we had spent, and looking forward to many more years on earth; when behold! there was a great light all around us, and then an almost invisible figure of a sweet angel stood by your side and whispered in your ear. You suddenly turned pale, and began to vanish from my sight, till I was left all alone. I awoke with a feeling, not so much of sorrow, as of awe; and it still comes over me when I recall the vision.

MARTHA. But, George, if dreams go by contraries, this means that I shall *not* be taken from you.

WASHINGTON. May it not rather mean that *I* shall soon leave *you?*

MARTHA. Even were that so—though I do not think it—I should not be overmuch dismayed. For I am very sure that, when the angel whispers to you, I, too, shall hear his voice and quickly follow.

WASHINGTON (*laying his hand on hers*). Patsy! My dearest!

MARTHA. I heard the opening cannon of nearly all your campaigns. When you set forth on another, I shall not be far away.

WASHINGTON. I will send you an invitation to Headquarters.

MARTHA. And I will come.

The picture fades out.

GEORGE WASHINGTON *died twelve days later;* MARTHA *two years and four months after him.*

PREFACE TO "BEATRIZ JUANA" AND "LIDIA"

MANY dramatists have treated more or less modern themes in an Elizabethan manner: these two plays attempt to treat Elizabethan themes in a more or less modern manner.

They are in reality an outcome of my lifelong concern with dramatic criticism. They are dramatic criticism operating, not by precept, but by example. Having for forty years spelt "w-i-n-d-e-r—winder," I thought, on the principle laid down by an eminent educationist, that it was high time that I turned to and cleaned it.

In less figurative language: the preparation for a course of lectures delivered at King's College in 1920 involved the rereading of a large number of Elizabethan plays; and I was struck by the fact that several of the themes treated by the minor Elizabethans and Jacobeans contained elements of enduring vitality that were overlaid and obscured by the technical and spiritual crudities of a semi-barbarous age. The chief of these, on the tragic side, was *The Changeling*, by Middleton and Rowley, which Sir Walter Scott, before the days of hysterical Elizabethan worship, had noted as a thing of singular power; while, on the comic side, *The Great Duke of Florence*, by Philip Massinger, had, I thought, been underestimated by the critics. Almost without conscious purpose, I began to reconstruct the two themes in my mind, in the light of what I humbly conceive to be the more civilized theatrical methods of to-day. In each case, what I took from my original was simply one or two characters and a situation; apart from these, everything had to be reinvented. Before I began to rehandle either Middleton's theme or Massinger's, many months had elapsed since I had read my original; and in neither case did I once reopen the Elizabethan text. Two lines in the second act of

Beatriz Juana are suggested by my recollection of a phrase of Middleton's; but otherwise my verbal indebtedness is nil.

I make no attempt to explain or defend the details of my remodelling: partly because such discussion would be tedious; partly because I am sincerely anxious that readers should turn to my originals and judge for themselves whether, and how far, my temerity has justified itself. The theoretical point I set out to prove was that dramatic creation, as we nowadays understand it, demands a form of intellectual effort totally different from that of the Elizabethans, and far more complex. May I note that readers who care to think the matter out will see that the validity of my argument does not wholly depend on the artistic merits or demerits of my two plays? An impartial jury might quite possibly decide that the theory on which I proceeded was right, though in putting it in practice I had shown myself an inefficient craftsman.

Why, it may be asked, in attempting to produce modern plays, have I chosen the antiquated medium of blank verse? The answer is that I tried to write in prose and failed. I found it impossible to hit on any form of speech that did not seem hopelessly out of keeping with these Mediterranean, cinquecento themes. Blank verse, then, I adopted rather as a dialect than as a poetical form. I make no pretence to rival either Middleton or Massinger (and much less their more lyrical contemporaries) as a poet. I make no pretence to be a poet at all. My criticism of the minor Elizabethans may be summed up in the contention that they were specifically poets rather than dramatists; whereas I am, or try to be, specifically a dramatist, and not a poet.

In ignoring this distinction, the criticism of the past century has, in my judgment, gone regrettably astray. For reasons which it would take too long to discuss, almost every man who could hold a pen, in the Elizabethan age, could, now and then at all events, write delicious poetry. When Lamb in the first years of the nineteenth century unearthed the treasures which had lain almost unsuspected for over a hundred years, his exquisite perception of poetic

values misled him as to the dramatic values of his find. No one feels more keenly than I that Charles Lamb is never to be thought of without love and reverence; but, none the less, he was a disastrous critic of drama. He did not know where the essence of drama lay; and he handed on that disability to a whole school of more dogmatic and less perceptive critics. These plays may be regarded as a continuation of the endeavour I made in my before mentioned lectures to enforce the distinction between verbal poetry and drama. Unsympathetic critics will no doubt say that I have at least been successful in avoiding poetry. I warn them in advance that I shall accept the remark as a compliment.

It may seem impertinent to drag Shakespeare into this discussion; but, to avoid misunderstanding, I must try, in a final word, to state my view of his relation to his contemporaries. The radical error of the Lamb school of criticism, I suggest, is that it tends to minimize the gulf that separates him from them. It would be rash to say that he was greater as a dramatist than as a poet: for who shall measure two immeasurable supremacies? But it is the simple truth that his dramatic supremacy was the rarer and more astounding of the two. For my part, at any rate, I cannot find words to express my estimate of his greatness. But he has suffered in the criticism of the past century, not only by the tendency to make him out a mere *primus inter pares*, but by the no less unhappy tendency to ignore the distinction between the lesser Shakespeare and the greater. Until we are ready to admit that he wrote, or at any rate was finally responsible for, some very bad plays, we can have no true perception of the magnificence of his genius. I need not, and must not, say anything more on this theme. I merely wish to make it clear that although I am, no doubt, in a certain sense, a disparager of the Elizabethans, all that I say, directly or indirectly, must be taken with the proviso "Shakespeare apart."

Hamilton, Bermuda,
March 8, 1923.

BEATRIZ JUANA

PREFATORY NOTE

In the names *Beatriz Juana* and *De Flores* I have acknowledged my indebtedness to *The Changeling*, by Middleton and Rowley, for the central situation of this play. From the Jacobean tragedy I have taken nothing else. I have, as it were, reinvented the whole action, in terms of latter-day technique. I read *The Changeling* once, many years ago, and a second time several months before I began this play. In the course of writing it, I have not once opened the book. Two lines in the second act are suggested by my recollection of a passage in Middleton. Not another word have I consciously borrowed.

If the technical methods are, or aim at being, modern, why have I adopted the convention of blank verse? My answer is that I tried prose and found it impossible. I made more than one attempt, but never got beyond a few speeches, which, on re-reading, seemed to me ludicrous. Quite modern speech was hopelessly incongruous with the period, place and theme. It jarred upon, and even paralyzed the imagination. What is known as "Wardour-Street English" was worse. It brought with it associations of an order of romance totally different from that which I was attempting. I fell back on blank verse, not as a medium of poetry, but simply as a dialect which the custom of centuries has led us to associate with Renaissance, and, especially, with Mediterranean themes. It is not "poetic drama" that I have tried to write: I have not even aimed at rhetorical graces. It was "stark" undecorated drama that I wished to produce; and, rightly or wrongly, I thought measured speech less jarring than any other form of utterance I could devise. But I have not tried to make either my vocabulary or my rhythms Elizabethan. On the contrary my endeavour has been to avoid expressions which belonged peculiarly to any particular period, whether ancient or modern.

PERSONS

Don Hippolito de Urgel—(55).
Beatriz Juana, *his daughter*—(22).
Camilla, *her maid.*
Don Beltran de Cabra—(30).
Don Manuel de Merlo—(26).
Don Gedeon de Merlo—(23).
Miguel de Flores, *Don Hippolito's Intendant*—(40).
Ottavio, *Don Manuel's parasite.*
The Corregidor *and* Alguazils.
Fabio, Blasco, Pablo } *and other* Servants.

Scene: Valencia—in and near Don Hippolito's palace.

Time: About 1600.

ACT FIRST

An irregularly paved terrace between the palace and the garden of Don Hippolito de Urgel. *At the back, a high wall, pierced, somewhat to the right, by a handsome gate of wrought iron. Over the wall distant houses and a church are (in the daylight) visible. A wing of the palace on the right; two or three windows on the ground level, but no door; the windows with the projecting iron gratings (rejas) common in Spanish houses. The glazed casements open inwards, and are scarcely, if at all, visible. A wide space, by which entrances and exits are made, between the building and the back wall. In the centre a large tree, overshadowing the scene, with a bench round it. In front, on the left, a circular canopy, with pillars, over the mouth of a well, and a semicircular marble seat running round the well. Suspended from the canopy is a wheel, but no rope. The mouth of the well is closed by a wooden cover, hinged in the middle, so that one-half of it can easily be raised. The well is a beautiful piece of architecture, but is noticeably dilapidated—slightly ruinous. A pergola, running at right angles to the wall, and some overarching trees, close the scene on the left.*

Scene 1: Midnight

Moonlight. The voice of a man, hidden by the wall, is heard singing to the accompaniment of a lute.

Beatriz Juana *and* Camilla *are seen in the moonlight within the grating of the window farthest forward on the right. Both are fully dressed.*

Beatriz. Whose is the voice? Don Manuel's?

Camilla. Well you know
'Tis not Don Manuel's croak.

BEATRIZ. Whose then?

CAMILLA. Nay, nay,
Dear mistress, why this show of ignorance?
Have you no ear? (*The singing ceases.*)

BEATRIZ. The tale my ear would tell
My heart is eager to believe—yet dare not.

CAMILLA. Think you Don Manuel would desert his bed
To pay you court with music? Listen well,
And you may hear the music of his snores.
He knows you by your father's dictate his,
Deems his sweet person irresistible,
And does not stoop to woo, but waves his hand,
And looks to see you kneel and worship him.
Trust me, dear mistress, if he serenades
At all, it is at casements all unbarred,
And balconies that he may lightly scale.

BEATRIZ. No more of him, Camilla! He may scale
What balconies he will for me.
(*Another voice begins to sing to the lute.*)
Hark, hark!
That is another voice, not Don Beltrán's.

CAMILLA. So, so! Your ear is quick enough, meseems!
You have betrayed yourself. You knew right well
The voice that first we heard.

BEATRIZ. I did, I did!
But when you love, Camilla, you may learn
That love delights in small hypocrisies.
See, see! What shadow flitted by the well?

CAMILLA. Nay, I see nothing.

BEATRIZ. 'Neath the pergola,
Look, it is moving!

CAMILLA. By my faith, 'tis so!
A man!

BEATRIZ. Speak you with him: I will withdraw.

BELTRAN DE CABRA, entering down L., has stolen round in the shadow, but now advances into the moonlight.

CAMILLA. 'Tis Don Beltrán.

BEATRIZ. Then all the more, Camilla,
He must not see me till he beg for me. [*She withdraws.*

BELTRAN. Hist! hist! What shimmering form is that I see
Behind the envious grating? Dare I hope
That 'tis the Lady Beatriz?

CAMILLA. Nay, Señor,—
The Lady Beatriz's waiting-woman.
I am Camilla. Who are you? And how
Come you by night——?

BELTRAN. Walls have been scaled ere now:
And sure you know me, wench?

CAMILLA. It cannot be
Señor de Cabra?

BELTRAN. Rightly guessed! I am
Beltrán de Cabra, and your lady's slave.
Beseech her, of her bounty, good Camilla,
To grant me one brief moment of her presence.

CAMILLA. I'll bear your message, Señor. [*Withdraws.*

BELTRAN (*steals over to the gate*). Fabio! Hist!

FABIO (*appearing at the gate*). Señor?

BELTRAN. Cease singing, Fabio. Let your lute
Whisper of love in wordless melody.

FABIO. So be it, master mine.

He retires, and continues to touch the lute softly and plaintively. As BELTRAN *returns to the window,* BEATRIZ *appears at it. She has changed her dress and assumed a studied déshabillé.*

BELTRAN. Sweet Beatriz!
My gracious lady, deign you to accept

The homage of a heart that beats for you,
And you alone?

BEATRIZ. Fie on you, Don Beltrán!
Why wake me thus, at midnight, from my dreams,
Imperilling, it may be, my good name?
(*Shrinking back from him.*)
Nay, look not on me! Startled and abashed
I dare not face you. Quick! your errand tell,
And get you gone.

BELTRAN. Why, what should be my errand
But to give pleading utterance to the love
My passionate eyes so oft have silently
Avowed?

BEATRIZ. Alas, sir——

BELTRAN. Say not I misread
The answering message of those eyes divine
That owned my worship, and rebuked it not.

BEATRIZ. Alas! I have been much to blame—my eyes,
My tell-tale eyes, it seems, have uttered things,
Unwittingly, that ought to have found no voice
Even in the dim recesses of my heart.

BELTRAN. What mean you, lady?

BEATRIZ. Have I not, Beltrán,
Betrayed to you that which my plighted faith
And filial duty, aye, and maiden shame
Forbade me to confess, ev'n to myself?

BELTRAN. Is, then, the rumour true——?

BEATRIZ. What rumour?

BELTRAN That
Which says that you must wed Manuel de Merlo?

BEATRIZ. My father wills it, and my word is given.

BELTRAN. That popinjay!

BEATRIZ. That popinjay has lands
That interlock with ours; and I, alas!
My father's only child——

BELTRAN. But Don Hippolito,
Your father, is he not the wealthiest man
Of all the province?

BEATRIZ. Wealth still craves for wealth,
And, if I wed not as he wills, my father
Has vowed to disinherit me.

BELTRAN. Sweet lady,
What matters that? If, as my leaping heart
Divines, you loathe this marriage, and disdain not
The worship of my body and my soul,
Then fly with me, my Beatriz! We'll brave
Your father's wrath! 'Tis you I love, dear angel—
Not lands and palaces. My blood is noble;
Pure as your father's: I am a hidalgo.
And though my patrimony match not yours,
This scabbard holds a sword shall carve a way
To wealth and honours worthy even of you.
Take heart, sweet Beatriz! Should your sire deny
His sanction to my suit, we'll do without it!
You shall steal forth, the church shall make us one,
And we'll away—on my good courser I,
You on an Arab jennet velvet-paced!
My two retainers, and your own Camilla
Shall be our escort, and in three short days
We'll reach, a joyous, singing cavalcade,
My tower, my eyrie, in the Murcian hills.

BEATRIZ. The Murcian hills! To leave Valencia
For ever!

BELTRAN. 'Till your father's wrath be cooled.

BEATRIZ. You know him not. He'd hold my flight dishonour,
And never look upon my face again.

BELTRAN. He loves you not, then, and to thwart his will
Becomes the less a sin.

BEATRIZ. But why, Beltrán,
Seek you a dowerless and outcast bride?
You would not strip me of my heritage?

BELTRAN. Not willingly, sweet maid; but, rich or poor,
I love you; and, though my estate be small,
I am no beggar. You shall be the queen
Of my poor lordship——

BEATRIZ. In the Murcian hills!
To live in banishment.

BELTRAN. Oh, cruel word!

BEATRIZ. See you no remedy?

BELTRAN. None, unless your father
Relent——

BEATRIZ. His faith is pledged to Manuel.
But if——

BELTRAN. If? what?

BEATRIZ. Your sword, you said, should carve
A way to wealth and honour: might it not,
At need——

BELTRAN. Speak plainly.

BEATRIZ. Carve a way to *me?*

BELTRAN. Would you, dear lady, wait till I have won
Renown and fortune?

BEATRIZ. There's a shorter way—
A single thrust would do't.

BELTRAN. A single thrust?

BEATRIZ. Don Manuel bars our way to happiness—
Don Manuel is a fool——

BELTRAN. A popinjay!
But what of that?

BEATRIZ. Are you so dull, Beltrán–

BELTRAN. I dare not read your meaning, Beatriz.

BEATRIZ. Where gallants meet, the rapier in its sheath
Sits lightly. Every day brings forth its duel.
No need to force a quarrel—Manuel's folly
Will see to that. You have but to challenge him,
And——

BELTRAN. Murder him! Is that what you would say?

BEATRIZ. Since when is killing in fair fight called murder?

BELTRAN. The fight a cut-throat forces is not fair.

BEATRIZ. Is he who wields the stronger blade a cut-throat?

BELTRAN. Yes, if he quarrel with intent to slay.

BEATRIZ. I am a woman, little skilled in logic:
I cannot argue, I can only love.
You are a swordsman of the tongue, Beltrán;
You thrust and parry nimbly; but, alack!
I see you do not love; to love you play
The cut-throat.

BELTRAN. Sweetest lady, say not so!
Ask of me what you will! No toil or danger
Shall daunt me that your witching voice commands,
If but the voice of honour chimes with it.

BEATRIZ. So, sir, it seems I tempt you to dishonour!

BELTRAN. Women, my Beatriz, see not with men's eyes.

BEATRIZ. If with men's weapons they could fight, Señor,
Bold were the man who should impugn the honour
Of Beatriz Juana de Urgel!

BELTRAN. Hear me, dear lady!

BEATRIZ. Nay, sir, fare you well!
Your honour chime not, as you say, with mine.
I little thought—if hither, sir, you came
Resolved to humble me—Camilla, come!
Camilla!—you have won your wager, sir.
Go, boast your victory o'er a woman's weakness,
Who owned her love only that you might flout it.
Farewell!

CAMILLA *is seen for a moment,* BEATRIZ *rushes to her, and they both pass out of sight.*

BELTRAN. Nay, hear me, Beatriz!—She is gone.
I was too peremptory, she, poor maid,
Too passionate! Yet will I fight for her,

Though not with traitorous weapons. For, God's blood!
If she is less than wise, she is more than fair.
(*Reaching the gate, he says.*)
Hist! Fabio! the ladder!

FABIO *appears and motions towards the left.* BELTRAN *goes out to the left, skirting the wall.*

BEATRIZ *reappears with* CAMILLA *at the window.*

BEATRIZ (*looking out cautiously*). Is he gone?

CAMILLA. Yes, lady.

BEATRIZ. Oh, my lover! There he stood,
And braved me like a fool—but like a king!
Oh, I could kiss his footprints. Even his honour
I love, while I despise. Men will be men,
And headstrong. Only weaklings crouch before us.
By the new tremor in my heart I know,
And the sweet, subtle tingling in my veins,
'Twas for this man that I was born a woman!
I shall not sleep, Camilla.

The Curtain falls.

SCENE 2: MID-DAY

When the curtain rises again, the scene is bathed in sunshine, except where the trees give shade. The great gate stands open.

DON HIPPOLITO DE URGEL, *a handsome man of fifty-five, is seated at a movable table beneath the tree, centre, finishing breakfast. A flask of wine, a ham, bread and fruit on the table.* BLASCO *and another man-servant in attendance on him.*

CAMILLA *enters,* R.—*that is to say, between the house and the back wall.*

HIPPOLITO. Comes she, Camilla?

CAMILLA. Lady Beatriz
Entreats your pardon, sir. She slept but ill.
In half an hour she'll wait upon you.

HIPPOLITO. So!
Slept she but ill? I heard a lute at midnight:
Doubtless Don Manuel serenading her.

CAMILLA (*demurely*). Doubtless, my lord.

HIPPOLITO. Well, I am for the harbour.
See that I find her here when I return.
[*Exit* CAMILLA, R.
(*To the servants*) Away with this!
(*As they are clearing the table*)
Blasco, you sail at sunset,
Attending on De Flores, for Palermo.
Have you been warned?

BLASCO. Señor de Flores gave me
My orders. I am ready.

HIPPOLITO. Good!

BLASCO. Your pardon,
My Margarita fain would know, my lord,
How long we shall be absent?

HIPPOLITO. Full three months;
It may be, four. De Flores has great matters
In charge. At Palma de Mallorca first
You touch, for there my oil-mills go not well.
Then on to Sicily—'tis his task to sift
And recompose the affairs of my estate.
Ah, here he comes!

Enter DE FLORES *from the right. Exeunt* R. *the two servants, carrying the table, etc.*

DE FLORES *is a man of forty—tall, gaunt, lantern-jawed, sinister-looking, with a patch over his right eye. Plainly, but not poorly, dressed. Hat in hand. He wears no weapons.*

DE FLORES. Your servant, gracious lord.

HIPPOLITO. Is all prepared, De Flores, for your voyage?

DE FLORES. All is prepared, my lord.

HIPPOLITO. And in my treasury
You leave me ample monies to defray
The charges of my daughter's wedding-feast?

DE FLORES. A half-year's revenue in minted gold.

HIPPOLITO. 'Tis well. We have to-day St. Julian's eve,
And I have vowed a vow, ere Pentecost
To see her wed. I'd fain have had your aid
In ordering the revels—but you know
This ill-timed, pestilent Sicilian tangle
Needs prompt unravelment.

DE FLORES. Then, good my lord,
Why not delay the wedding? Neither bride
Nor groom, methinks, will die of thwarted longing.

HIPPOLITO. Too true—and therein lies the need for haste.
Don Manuel is humoursome, unstable,
A braggart reveller. Light loves content him,
He shirks the weight of wedlock. And my daughter
Chafes at his vapouring, with threats, forsooth,
Of rank rebellion 'gainst her father's will.
It must not be! Marriage will tame the twain of them.
I long to dance my grandson on my knee,
The heir to half a province, and to names
The haughtiest of Spain.

DE FLORES. May heaven fulfil
Your every hope, my lord.

HIPPOLITO. Now to the harbour.
The master of your carack, as I think,
Is Guzman?

DE FLORES. He it is; and, I bethink me,
He bade me ask your licence to give passage
To Palma de Mallorca for Ottavio,
Don Manuel's henchman.

HIPPOLITO. Say his parasite!
I know the fellow—Manuel's evil genius—
And am right glad to place the sea between them.
Why goes he to Mallorca?

DE FLORES. On a mission
They tell me, from Don Manuel to his father,
At his Mallorcan villa.

HIPPOLITO. Then let Guzman
By all means speed the fellow's passage thither,
But for no bribery bring him back again.
Call Blasco to attend me.

DE FLORES (*calls*). Blasco! Blasco!
Exit DE FLORES, R. *At this moment* BELTRAN *appears at the gate, coming from the left, and enters.*

BELTRAN. Your humble servant, Don Hippolito.

HIPPOLITO. Your servant, sir.
(*Recognizing him*) Surely 'tis Don Beltrán De Cabra?

BELTRAN. He, my lord.

HIPPOLITO. You are welcome, sir.

BELTRAN. At the Alcalde's banquet, sir, you said
That I might wait on you.

HIPPOLITO. I told you then
Your father fought beside me at Lepanto,
And you should be right welcome for his sake.
But now——

BELTRAN. I come untimely?

HIPPOLITO. At the harbour
I have some business that requires my care.

BELTRAN. May I attend you thither?

HIPPOLITO. With all my heart.
I but await my servant. Pray be seated.
(*He seats himself at the upper end of the semicircular*

seat around the well. As BELTRAN *is about to sit on the margin of the well itself, he says:)*

Beware! That coping may be treacherous.
Rather sit here. (*Making room for him.*)

BELTRAN. The well is very ancient?

HIPPOLITO. Nay, not so ancient. In my grandsire's time
This canopy was built. But since the earthquake
Five months ago, the well is waterless,
The masonry is cracked and crumbling. One day
I purpose to repair the canopy.

BELTRAN. And fill the well?

HIPPOLITO. 'Twould be too great a labour.
'Tis strangely deep. This cover makes all safe.

Enter BLASCO, R.

Ah, here my servant comes.
(*To* BLASCO) Take thou my sword,
And follow us. (BLASCO *takes the sword.*)

BELTRAN I have, my lord, a suit
I fain would venture to prefer to you.

HIPPOLITO. A suit, young man?

BELTRAN. A most ambitious suit,
For which I beg a patient hearing.

HIPPOLITO. Come sir;
We'll weigh the matter as we walk along.

BELTRAN. You are all courtesy, my lord.

They pass through the gateway and go out to the left. The stage is vacant for a moment. Then DE FLORES *enters from the right, and goes cautiously up to the foremost window.*

DE FLORES. Camilla!
Camilla, hist!

Camilla appears behind the grating.

CAMILLA. What would you?

DE FLORES. Knows your mistress
What is in store for her at Pentecost?

CAMILLA. At Pentecost?

DE FLORES. Poor lamb, her fate is fixt.

CAMILLA. Her wedding mean you?

DE FLORES. Aye, with Manuel.

CAMILLA. That day will never dawn. She'll sooner wed
Satan himself—a blackamoor—or you,
De Flores of the rueful countenance.

DE FLORES. I'll pay you out, minx!

CAMILLA. Pay me out? for what?
Pay *her* out, rather, who in childish rage,
Defaced your beauty with her riding-whip.

DE FLORES. Aye, mock away, my mistress; but beware!
[CAMILLA *retires.*
One day I may pay out the two of you.

DE FLORES, *who is wearing his hat, moves up to go out,* R. *As he does so,* DON MANUEL *and* OTTAVIO *appear at the gate, coming from the right.*

MANUEL. Hey, *you,* sir!

(DE FLORES *glances over his shoulder, but does not stop.*)

Is the fellow deaf? My man!
Come hither! (DE FLORES *pays no heed.*)
Stop the slave, Ottavio!

OTTAVIO *runs after* DE FLORES *and claps him on the shoulder.*

OTTAVIO. Don Manuel calls to you.

DE FLORES *turns and advances a little.*

MANUEL. You heard me, villain!

DE FLORES. I heard your voice, Señor, but not my name;
And, from your tone, I thought you hailed a lackey.

MANUEL. And so I did, for you I hailed.

DE FLORES. I am
My lord's intendant.

MANUEL. Oh, I cry you mercy,
Señor Intendant! I am little skilled
In nice precedences of vassalage.

DE FLORES. You know me well, Señor.

MANUEL. Aye, that I do,
And know you for a sullen, upstart knave.
(*Knocking off his hat.*)
Off with your hat, sir, when you speak to me!
(DE FLORES, *his face full of rage, feels instinctively for his sword, but finds himself unarmed. He masters himself, and picks up his hat.*
Go, tell your mistress I attend her here,
And have but little leisure, since at noon
I go a-hawking.

DE FLORES. I will tell her maid.

MANUEL. Tell whom you will, man, so you speed her coming,
And take your scowling visage out of sight.
(DE FLORES *goes out to the right, putting on his hat as he does so, with a defiant gesture.* MANUEL *seats himself beneath the tree.*)
When I am in the saddle here, Ottavio,
That scoundrel shall repent his insolence.

OTTAVIO. You have the true patrician style, my lord,
With such as he. Men know in you their master.

MANUEL. And women? Hey, Ottavio?

OTTAVIO. Oh, as for women
You're not their master——

MANUEL. Not——?

OTTAVIO. You are their god.
Their very Jove.

MANUEL 'Tis true I have a way with them.
What was their name for me in Alicante?

OTTAVIO. Why, Manuel the Merciless.

MANUEL. 'Twas so—
Well, I have earned the title—in the lists
Of love, I give no quarter—and the more
I mow them down, the more they challenge me.
The pretty fools.

OTTAVIO. You are a shining flame
Wherein the moths, in headlong rivalry,
Are mad to singe their wings.

MANUEL. My life's a burden—
They will not let me be.

OTTAVIO. Nay, you are impious
To quarrel with the gifts the gracious gods
Have showered on you, their darling—to the envy
Of common mortals—such as I.

MANUEL. Well, well,
The burden one is born to one must bear.

OTTAVIO. And yours is ancient blood and manly grace,
And wit and fascination.

MANUEL. Nay, Ottavio,
You know I love not flattery.

OTTAVIO. Flattery!
Hear him, ye gods! I speak the plain, blunt truth,
And for my pains am dubbed a flatterer!
I'll tell you of your faults, then—and the greatest
Is undervaluing your own deserts.
Your modesty. . . . But lo! the Lady Beatriz——

MANUEL. At last! Hold *you* the waiting-woman in play.

OTTAVIO. Trust me!

BEATRIZ, *followed by* CAMILLA, *enters from the right.* CAMILLA *stops, up* R. OTTAVIO, *with many bows to* BEATRIZ *as he passes her, joins* CAMILLA *and talks to her in whispers.* BEATRIZ *advances.*

BEATRIZ. Your lordship deigned to summon me?

MANUEL. I did. A fair good-morrow, sweetheart mine.

BEATRIZ. Sweetheart, forsooth! Am I a tavern wench
To be accosted thus?

MANUEL. Why, hoity-toity!
What would you? We're as good as man and wife.

BEATRIZ. There wants but one thing.

MANUEL. One thing?

BEATRIZ. My consent.

MANUEL. Nay, nay—on me this coyness is but wasted—
I am no novice in the ways of women.
So, lady mine (since sweetheart likes you not)
Pray waste no time in coquetry. Your father
And mine have wedded us with mutual vows
And parchments signed and sealed. The ceremony
Alone is lacking.

BEATRIZ. And if I say—no?

MANUEL. Pooh, pooh! Time flies. Ere noon I must to horse.
Spare me this show of maidenly reluctance.
'Tis at your father's bidding I am here
To fix the day with you. Within a month
He swears we shall be one.

BEATRIZ. I am loath to balk
The passionate impatience of your wooing;
Your eloquent entreaties move me deeply,
Your chivalrous homage to my womanhood—
All this I prize; yet trust me, sir, I'd rather
Die as a cloistered nun than be your wife.
So fare you well! Camilla, come!

MANUEL (*getting between her and the right*). Stay, mistress!
A jest may go too far.

BEATRIZ. This jest, Señor,
Has gone a thousand miles beyond my liking.

MANUEL. Reject my suit!

BEATRIZ. Even so, in sober earnest.

Your suit was not a suit, but a command.
Whistle your dogs to heel. No spaniel I.

MANUEL. Command? It was your father who commanded.

BEATRIZ. You, jailor-like, did but present his warrant,
And bid me follow you to prison.

MANUEL. Dost think
'Tis Manuel de Merlo's wont to implore
A woman's favour on his bended knees?

BEATRIZ. 'Tis time that Manuel de Merlo learned
Civility—but not with me for tutor.

DON HIPPOLITO, DON BELTRAN *and* BLASCO *enter unobserved, by the gateway, coming from the left. They stand at the back, watching the scene.*

MANUEL. Civility! I'd have you know, my lady,
I am no common suitor, nor are you
The paragon, the Phœnix of your sex.
A score of ladies—Don Ottavio there,
My friend, will bear me witness—just as fair
And nobly-born as you, to win my hand
Would go in pilgrimage upon their knees
To Compostella—aye, and back again!

BEATRIZ. If boasting, sir, could win my love, you had won it
Many times over. Let me pass!

MANUEL (*seizing her wrist*). By heaven,
Hear me you shall! You know not what you do.

BELTRAN (*coming forward, with his sword drawn*).
Nor you, sir, when you dare to lay a hand
Upon that lady. Instantly release her,
Or——

MANUEL. Or?

BELTRAN. I'll skewer you, Sir Popinjay!

MANUEL *drops* BEATRIZ'S *hand, and makes a feeble show of drawing his sword.* HIPPOLITO *comes forward and intervenes.*

HIPPOLITO. Come, gentlemen, enough of this. Don Manuel
Your courtship scarce was courtly.

MANUEL. Sir, your daughter
With insolence rejects my suit.

BELTRAN. Take heed, sir!
When a fair lady freely speaks her mind,
'Tis insolent to talk of insolence.
Withdraw the word, or——

MANUEL. Don Hippolito,
What does this bully here?

HIPPOLITO. A plague on both of you,
Brawlers! Don Manuel, you forget yourself.
But if my daughter, Don Beltrán, should need
A champion, that part is mine. I am old
But not outworn—I need no substitute.

BELTRAN. I bow to the rebuke, sir.

HIPPOLITO. You, Don Manuel,
Have touched the lute, it seems, with little skill,
And set it jarring.

MANUEL. Touched the lute, indeed!
Say, rather, stroked a tigress 'gainst the grain.

HIPPOLITO. Girl, what say *you?*
BEATRIZ *bursts out laughing.*

MANUEL. She laughs! at me! at *me!*

BEATRIZ. You would have laughed, dear father, to have seen
The supercilious air, the conquering strut,
The come-and-kiss-me-quick vaingloriousness,
Wherewith this señor—or this sultan, rather—
Claimed lordship o'er his humble handmaiden,
Your daughter.

HIPPOLITO. Peace, my daughter. You forget
You are Don Manuel's affianced bride.

BEATRIZ. Affianced!

HIPPOLITO. Yes, affianced, headstrong girl!
And if he claimed fulfilment of your pledge,
'Twas at my urgence.

BEATRIZ. Did you urge him, sir,
To issue his commands as to a slave?

HIPPOLITO. No more! A passing breeze, a lover's quarrel,
Weighs not a feather-weight 'gainst my fixed design,
My plighted word. You've played your part, Don Manuel,
Somewhat too boisterously for my daughter's taste.
But what of that? A maiden's petulance passes
Swift as a summer cloud before the moon.
Come you again to-morrow or the next day
And you shall find the wench, I warrant you,
In gentler mood.

BEATRIZ. A venturous warranty,
My father.

HIPPOLITO. Silence, girl!

MANUEL. Well, I will come.
But let me tell you, Don Hippolito,
I love not to be baited by a girl—
She must sing smaller, or I'll none of her.
A termagant, i'faith! The maid I wed
Must know her master, and accept his rule
With mannerly submission.

BELTRAN (*his hand on his sword*). Don Hippolito!
Is this to be endured?

MANUEL (*with affected disdain*). Call off your bravo,
My lady! Come, Ottavio.
With exaggerated bows to HIPPOLITO *and* BEATRIZ, *and gestures of defiance to* BELTRAN, *the two go out through the gateway, turning to the right.*

HIPPOLITO. Don Beltrán,
Curb your untimely zeal. Don Manuel
Is scarce a courtly cavalier. But, mistress,
You wantonly enraged him. Give and take—

That is the law of wedlock. Play him fairly,
And Manuel, for all his swaggering airs,
Will be your slave. I know you, daughter mine:
Trust *you* to hold your own 'gainst any man.

BELTRAN. Is, then, my suit still hopeless?

HIPPOLITO. Urge it not.
Your father was my friend, and much it grieves me
To do displeasure to your father's son;
But, as I told you, from the cradle up,
Don Manuel and my Beatriz have been plighted
With all solemnity. Their lands conjoined
Will form a little kingdom. 'Tis the hope
My heart is set on, since the will of Heaven
Vouchsafed me not a son.

BELTRAN. But since Don Manuel
Has forfeited, it seems, this lady's grace——

HIPPOLITO. Should *I*, then, hold my covenant forfeited?
Nay, sir, my honour's pledged.

BELTRAN. You see, fair lady,
How high my aspiration soared. I ventured
To crave your noble father's leave to offer
My homage to your beauty, and essay
To win your heart. My suit, alas, is vain;
My hopes are shattered——

HIPPOLITO. God be with you, sir!

BELTRAN. Adieu, my lord.
(*Kneeling to* BEATRIZ *and kissing her hand.*)
Lady, a sad farewell.

BEATRIZ. Farewell, sir—God be with you!
(*Whispering*) And despair not!
I'll die before I wed the popinjay.
[*Exit* BELTRAN *through the gateway and to the right.*

HIPPOLITO. A gallant gentleman!

BEATRIZ. Indeed? I have given
But little heed to him. I can think of naught

But your hard-heartedness, my tyrant father.
Are you unmoved? Is there no choice for me
But misery or disinheritance?

HIPPOLITO. Pooh! misery——

BEATRIZ. What else is loveless marriage?

HIPPOLITO. Love comes with time; and one day you will thank me
For giving you a weak, and not a strong man
To mate. Your spirit's masterful, my girl,
And scorns subjection.

BEATRIZ. So you think it meet
To break my spirit? But if I rebel,
And say I will not, *will not* marry Manuel,
What then?

HIPPOLITO. Why, then my lands and palaces
Here in Valencia, in Cataluña,
In Aragon, Mallorca, Sicily,
Go to my kinsman of the younger line,
Bernardo de Urgel; and as for you,
Your dowry, ample for a bride of Heaven,
Will feed the coffers of a nunnery.
'Tis my last word. [*Exit*, R.

BEATRIZ (*as he goes out*). I thank you, father dear.
(*Reflects for a few moments.*)
Camilla, are my gold-fish fed? Go, see to it.
(*As* CAMILLA *is going, calls after her*)
And send De Flores hither!

CAMILLA *having disappeared*, R., BEATRIZ *goes, with a certain stealthiness, over to the well, raises the cover with some effort, and looks down. She is in this position when* DE FLORES *enters*, R. *He advances a few steps.*

DE FLORES. My lady Beatriz!
You sent for me?

BEATRIZ *drops the cover and turns abruptly. She has been so lost in thought that she is a little startled.*

She advances to De Flores, *and they come down together to the seat under the tree.*

Beatriz. You are my friend, De Flores?
My good Miguel?

De Flores. Your servant, lady, ever.

Beatriz. I see you in my earliest memories,
First as the sergeant of my father's troop—
Sergeant, I think?

De Flores. Yes, lady.

Beatriz. Next alferez:
Then as his chamberlain: and now, Miguel,
Intendant of his principalities.

De Flores. Your father's grace advanced me.

Beatriz. And your merit.
And I—I think you know—have stood your friend.
She sits on the seat.

De Flores. My humblest thanks.

Beatriz. When, in my froward childhood,
I burst my waiting-women's leading strings,
You ever took my part.

De Flores. Lady, I did—
I turned a blind eye to your peccadillos.

Beatriz. Unkind, sir, to remind me——

De Flores (*hastily*). Nay, I meant not—
'Twas but a slip—— I could bite out my tongue!

Beatriz. That mishap is my one remorse.

De Flores. Forget it,
My lady. I was ever hard of feature;
Your riding-switch defaced no comeliness,
And one eyes serves me just as well as two—
Not much escapes it.

Beatriz. That I know, Miguel.
No need to tell you, therefore, how my heart
Contemns and loathes this marriage that my father
Would thrust upon me.

DE FLORES. I have guessed as much.

BEATRIZ. How think you of Don Manuel?

DE FLORES. Mistress mine,
'Tis not for me to——

BEATRIZ. I have seen him treat you
Like a mere lackey.

DE FLORES. Like a scullion, lady.
I say not that I love him.

BEATRIZ. Why should you,
A soldier, not ignobly born, be doomed
To crouch before a puppy's insolence?

DE FLORES. I am your father's servant——

BEATRIZ. For the time:
But were I mistress of my dower——

DE FLORES. Your dower
Is princely.

BEATRIZ. With the grange of Alcobar—
Where my poor mother died in her affliction—
Therefore unblest to me—there goes, I think,
A fair domain——

DE FLORES. A farm and fisheries,
With full seigniorial rights——

BEATRIZ. When I am married,
So it be not to Manuel, but to one
Whom I myself shall choose, that grange and farm,
De Flores, shall be yours.

DE FLORES. My bounteous mistress!
How shall I——?

BEATRIZ. But alas! while Manuel lives,
My father, well you know, will ne'er endure
To see me wed another.

DE FLORES. Where his word
Is pledged, my master's mind is adamant.

BEATRIZ. And therefore——

DE FLORES. Therefore?

BEATRIZ. While Don Manuel lives,
It seems that your release from servitude,
Your patent of gentility, remains
A thing phantasmal, inaccessible,
A castle in the clouds.

DE FLORES. To give it substance,
You mean that Manuel——?

BEATRIZ. His worthless life
Obstructs your fortunes——

DE FLORES. Menaces *your* freedom,
And, therefore, ought to—end?

BEATRIZ (*nods*). And speedily!

DE FLORES *turns away, with a look of exultation. Then, after a perceptible pause, he again faces* BEATRIZ.

DE FLORES. So ho, my lady! And you turn to me,
Your good Miguel, your faithful friend at need,
For this slight service?

BEATRIZ. 'Tis no slight reward
I offer.

DE FLORES. Know you that to-day at sunset
I sail for Sicily?

BEATRIZ. Delay your sailing.

DE FLORES. Your father orders it.

BEATRIZ. The resolute mind
Turns hindrances to profit. Sail at sunset
But bid the master anchor in the bay:
At midnight steal ashore, and—afterwards,
Hoist sail again ere dawn. So shall suspicion
Ne'er light on you.

DE FLORES. You plan a murder, lady,
As deftly as a mantlet. Must I, then,
Stab him in bed? Is that your gracious will?

BEATRIZ. In nowise. That were bungling. He must vanish!
Must disappear and leave no track behind.
Then 'twill be spread abroad that he pursues
Some light-o'-love, some gay Italian flame,
In passage to Madrid.

DE FLORES. You'll see to that?

BEATRIZ. I'll see to that.

DE FLORES. But without horse or carriage
He cannot reach Madrid; and if his servants
Know that no horse is missing——?

BEATRIZ. True! there lies
A danger——

DE FLORES. I can help you out of it.
Ottavio, his henchman, sails on the *Esperanza*
With me, for Palma. Let it be given out
That Manuel, in a sudden spleen, has turned
His back on you, and taken ship with us
Home to Mallorca——

BEATRIZ. 'Tis a good device!
That, too, will rouse my father's wrath against him,
And break the match.

DE FLORES. But still one stumbling-block,
One plaguy obstacle, remains.

BEATRIZ. You mean——?

DE FLORES. In brief—pray pardon me—I mean the body—
The inconvenient clod of flesh and bone—
You've thought of its disposal?

BEATRIZ. See you not
The way?

DE FLORES. I am dull. Forgive me and expound
Your plan.

BEATRIZ. I'll make a tryst with him to-night.
E'en now he left in anger—I had flouted him,
And galled his vanity till he writhed again.
Now you shall bear a message; you shall tell him

The Lady Beatriz repents, and craves
His pardon for her shrewishness, and prays him,
In pledge of reconcilement, here to meet her,
Here, by the well——

DE FLORES. The well!

BEATRIZ. Alone—at midnight—
That she may so do penance, as becomes
A maid, remorseful for her hasty fault.

DE FLORES. Then, if he come——

BEATRIZ. If! Do you doubt his coming?

DE FLORES. You will await him by the well?

BEATRIZ. Not I!
Another mistress, from whose close embraces
He never shall arise! And you, De Flores,
Shall lead him to her arms.

DE FLORES. How pat it goes!
The well-mouth, by some strange mischance, is open——

BEATRIZ. It opens easily——

DE FLORES. One flash of steel!
Your plighted lord slips down to doom as glibly
As sword into its scabbard! Truly, mistress,
A pretty piece of work! But take it not
Amiss, I pray you, if I crave a moment
To think upon't.
Pause.

BEATRIZ. The grange of Alcobar,
With rights seigniorial!

DE FLORES. Shall I sell my soul
For fisheries and vineyards? There's but one thing
For which a man will brave the sulphur-pool——

BEATRIZ. And that is——?

DE FLORES. Woman!

BEATRIZ. Why, well said, Miguel!
The lord of Alcobar may pick and choose
'Mong ladies of the province.

DE FLORES. And "well said",
Say I, my mistress! I can pick and choose!
'Tis true as a holy writ! I am your servant,
Lady—a weapon in your resolute grasp.

BEATRIZ. My brave De Flores!

DE FLORES. But, as I bethink me,
I have no fitting weapon to my hand.
My dagger, in the stag-hunt yesterday,
Fell from its sheath.

BEATRIZ (*unhooking a jewelled dagger that hangs at her girdle*).
Take this stiletto, Miguel—
A toy, but needle-keen.

DE FLORES. Aye, 'twill suffice.

BEATRIZ. Regard it as a pledge, to be redeemed
With title-parchments of your seigniory.

DE FLORES. I need no pledge, beyond my lady's word.

BEATRIZ. Say, then, a token of my friendship.

DE FLORES. Friendship!
Your graciousness o'erpowers me. (*Pause.*) One thing more.

BEATRIZ. What's that?

DE FLORES. Don Manuel knows I love him not;
And I should bear from you a message only,
With nought to vouch for it—no token—letter—
He will suspect an ambush, and refuse
My guidance.

BEATRIZ. True. Braggarts are ever cowards.
What token can I send?

DE FLORES. A letter, lady,
Were best—a honied word of penitence
And invitation——

BEATRIZ. I will write it straightway.
Come for it in an hour. My brave De Flores!
She turns away to go into the house.

DE FLORES. Lady! (*She stops and turns around.*)

BEATRIZ. What more?

DE FLORES. As I have cause to know,
'Tis perilous to trespass on your pride:
And yet, methinks, on such a day as this,
To seal our covenant, I might——

BEATRIZ. Might——? What?

DE FLORES. Presume to kiss your hand.

After a struggle, and with evident reluctance, she holds out her hand to him.

BEATRIZ. There, then!

He kisses her hand. She snatches it away, and hastens into the house, R.

DE FLORES (*to himself*). At last!
The bond is sealed! The day of payment, lady,
Will come anon: and paid in full it shall be!
You'll find me no complaisant creditor.

The Curtain falls.

SCENE 3: MIDNIGHT

Moonlight, but not so bright as on the previous evening. All is still, except for a very distant voice, singing to a lute. BEATRIZ, *wearing a loose robe over her night-dress, stands at the window, behind the grating.*

BEATRIZ. Not yet! Not yet! Pray heaven those serenaders
Come not this way. (*A pause.*) Oh, should De Flores
fail me——!
He cannot, oh, he cannot!
(*Another pause. Then* DE FLORES *and* MANUEL
appear outside the gate.)
Here they come!
Brave, brave De Flores! (*She retires out of sight.*)

DE FLORES *unlocks and opens the gate, and he and* MANUEL *enter.* MANUEL *wears a dark cloak over a bright costume of white satin.*

MANUEL (*at the gate*). Is she waiting, hey?
I cannot see her.

DE FLORES. Maidens, good my lord,
Love not to be the earliest at a meeting:
They deem that such a show of eagerness
Cheapens their favours.

MANUEL. If she keep me waiting——!

DE FLORES. Doubtless she watches at her window, ready
To hasten forth as soon as she shall see you
There, at the trysting-place. Now softly, so!
He guides MANUEL *on tip-toe forward to the well.*

MANUEL. Now she *must* see me!

DE FLORES. You're a clouded sun:
This cloak is dark—she may not well discern you.
Pray you unhook it: let her see your figure
In all its bravery. I'll bear the cloak,
And post me at the gate, as sentinel
Upon your privacy.
MANUEL *takes off his cloak and hands it to* DE FLORES, *who throws it down upon the seat.*

MANUEL. Still she delays!
If she be fooling me——! But it cannot be—
I have her letter safe: her reputation
Lies at my mercy——

DE FLORES. No, my lord! At mine!
Plunges the dagger in his heart. MANUEL *gives a cry, and then a gurgling groan.* DE FLORES *catches him as he falls, feels in his doublet for the letter, and secures it. Then he heaves the body up and drops it, feet foremost, into the well. At* MANUEL'S *cry,* BEATRIZ *has appeared at the window, where she stands grasping the bars and panting with suspense.* DE FLORES, *turning, sees her, and at once crosses to her, leaving* MANUEL'S *cloak and hat where they lie.*

BEATRIZ. You have done it!

DE FLORES. I have done the work; and now
I claim the wages.

BEATRIZ. Alcobar is yours,
My brave De Flores—with whatever more
A friend can do for your advancement. See!
Take you this packet—find some messenger—
Some one who knows you not—to bring it to me
To-morrow morning. (*Hands him a letter, tied up and sealed.*)

DE FLORES. One who knows me not——?
To bring it here——? To you——?

BEATRIZ. Do as I bid you—
Trust me—'tis for our safety! So, farewell!
A prosperous voyage to you.

DE FLORES. Farewell, lady,
Three months shall see me back again—and then——

BEATRIZ. Count on my gratitude! [*Exit.*

DE FLORES. I do, my beauty!
I've ta'en security!

(*He slips back to the well, unfastening the sheath of the daggar from his girdle.*)

The sheath must lie
Beside the dagger.

(*He drops it down the well, and throws in* MANUEL'S *hat and cloak.*)

There! Now rest in peace,
Most valiant Manuel. I'll make free, indeed,
To raise your ghost when it shall serve my purpose;
But you shall never know it!

He closes the well, and then slips over to the gate. Just then the serenading party is heard approaching: one playing the lute, and one singing softly. DE FLORES *stands in the shadow of the wall while they pass, then goes out, closes the gate, and is locking it as*

The Curtain falls.

ACT SECOND

A hall in DON HIPPOLITO'S *palace. A two-leaved entrance-door,* R. *A large two-leaved door in the back wall, centre. On the left a large window (or two smaller windows) with curved iron gratings looking out upon the garden.*

The furniture must be arranged in accordance with the period. The essentials are a heavy but movable table, with some chairs, up R.; *a couch or day-bed,* L., *and a prie-dieu. There must be nothing in the centre to obstruct the view of the centre door. A chandelier, centre. Morning light.*

Enter, R., DON GEDEON DE MERLO *and* OTTAVIO, *ushered in by* PABLO, *a servant.*

PABLO. I will go seek my master, sir.

GEDEON. And tell him
That Don Gedeón de Merlo, new arrived
From Palma de Mallorca, craves a word with him.

PABLO. I will, sir. [*Exit,* R.

GEDEON. This is passing strange, Ottavio!

OTTAVIO. 'Tis more than strange.

GEDEON. Who set the tale afloat
That Manuel sailed with you?

OTTAVIO. No one could tell.
'Twas in the air. But Don Hippolito,
All men assured me, knew it past a doubt,
And, bitterly enraged at the affront
Done to his daughter and his house, had yielded
The readier consentment to her marriage
With this Beltrán de Cabra.

GEDEON. Who is he?

OTTAVIO. I know him not. They say a poor hidalgo.

GEDEON. 'Tis a dark riddle!

Enter, from the right, DON HIPPOLITO.

HIPPOLITO. Welcome, Don Gedeón
Give me your hand! You were a sturdy boy
When last I saw you. Three years younger, is't not,
Than Manuel, your brother?

GEDEON. Aye, three years.

HIPPOLITO. How goes it with your father?

GEDEON. Sir, he is well.

HIPPOLITO. Though Manuel has used us scurvily
I would not have the friendship of our houses
Forgotten.

GEDEON. Where is Manuel, Señor?

HIPPOLITO. Manuel! You ask *me*——?

GEDEON. Where is Manuel?

HIPPOLITO. Where should he be? In Palma, I surmise.
If he has gone elsewhither, you should know,
Being newly come from there.

GEDEON. Sir, in Mallorca
He is not, nor has been this many a day.

HIPPOLITO. Why, you, sir—is your name Ottavio?—He sailed with you!

OTTAVIO. Not so, sir.

HIPPOLITO. In a fit
Of childish spleen, he broke his plighted faith
To Beatriz, my daughter, and set sail
In the *Esperanza,* my own carack——

OTTAVIO. Nay, sir—
I, by your licence, sailed in the *Esperanza,*
But not Don Manuel.

HIPPOLITO. Not Don Manuel!
Why, then, belike he went a-gadding elsewhere,
Mayhap in still worse company.

GEDEON. He took
No servant with him, and he rode no horse.
His servants and his horses all await him
Here in Valencia.

HIPPOLITO. And to Mallorca
He sailed not?

OTTAVIO. On the cross of Christ I swear
He sailed not!

HIPPOLITO. Then belike he sailed elsewhither.
Ships every day put forth. . . . Yet in the letter
He sent my daughter——

GEDEON. Letter!

HIPPOLITO. Aye, a petulant
Insulting scrawl—he said that in Mallorca
A lady languisht for him——

GEDEON. There is none such.

HIPPOLITO. An idle boast! I thought as much——
(CAMILLA *enters by the centre door, carrying a tray with the remains of a meal,—fruit, bread and wine.*)
Camilla,
When comes your mistress forth?

CAMILLA. My lord and lady
Are newly risen——

HIPPOLITO. Tell them I entreat
Their presence here.
(CAMILLA *puts down the tray on the table,* R., *returns to the centre door, knocks and enters.*)
A new-made man and wife—
But six days wed—they rise not with the lark.

GEDEON. Saw you my brother's letter?

HIPPOLITO. Saw it? No——
My daughter told me of it.

GEDEON. Then you know not
If 'twas his hand indeed that writ it?

HIPPOLITO. Why,
Who else should write it?
(*Re-enter* CAMILLA, *centre.*)
You, Camilla, saw
Don Manuel's letter to your mistress?

CAMILLA. Surely,
I saw it, sir.

GIDEON. And did you read it?

CAMILLA. Nay, sir:
I cannot read. I saw my mistress tear it
Into a thousand pieces in her wrath.

GEDEON. Saw you the messenger that bore it?

CAMILLA. Aye, sir:
It was to me he gave it.

GEDEON. Knew you him?

CAMILLA. I knew him not. He seemed a sailorman—
Biscayan or Galician.
CAMILLA *takes up the tray, and exit,* R.

HIPPOLITO. Doubtless one
Whom, ere he sailed, Don Manuel fee'd to bear it.

GEDEON. Ottavio, we must find this messenger,
Biscayan or Galician. We must search
The port. But later, with your leave, my lord,
I shall return, in hope to see your daughter,
And learn of her——

HIPPOLITO. All that my daughter knows
I have told you. But she doubtless will repeat it
At your desire.

GEDEON. I thank you, sir.
Enter BLASCO, R.

HIPPOLITO. Why, Blasco,
Are you returned?

BLASCO. My lord, the *Esperanza*
Anchored an hour ago. I ran ahead

To tell you that Señor de Flores follows,
Not empty-handed.

HIPPOLITO. Was his mission, then,
Successful?

BLASCO. Far beyond his hopes, he says.

OTTAVIO. You, fellow, were on board the *Esperanza*
When I to Palma de Mallorca sailed!

BLASCO. Señor Ottavio! Yes, as far as Palma
You sailed with us.

OTTAVIO. And was Don Manuel
De Merlo on the carack?

BLASCO. Was Don Manuel——?
You know, sir, he was not.

OTTAVIO. You see, my lord,
De Flores, questionless, will say the same.

HIPPOLITO. 'Tis past my wit——
(*Enter*, R., DE FLORES, *followed by two men bearing a heavy casket. Some servants crowd behind him and stand at the door.*)
Welcome, my good De Flores!

DE FLORES. My lord, your humble servant.

HIPPOLITO. Blasco tells me
Your mission has been fruitful.

DE FLORES. Heaven be praised!
(*Laying his hand on the casket.*)
Here is the garnered harvest.

HIPPOLITO. Faithfully
You have ever served me. You shall tell your tale
Anon. (*To the servants*) The casket to my cabinet bear.
The men turn to the door, R. DE FLORES *checks them and points to the centre door.*

DE FLORES. His lordship's cabinet—yonder!

HIPPOLITO. Nay, De Flores:
(*He motions the servants to leave the room,* R.)
'Tis to an altered house that you return.
My cabinet is beside your own, and this
Is now my daughter's bridal-chamber.

DE FLORES. Bridal——!
Your daughter's——?

HIPPOLITO. She is wedded.

DE FLORES (*stammering*). Did—did *he*——
Don Manuel——?

HIPPOLITO. Nay, Don Manuel played the recreant:
He broke his pledge, and fled. A week ago
My daughter gave her hand to Don Beltrán
De Cabra.

DE FLORES. Don Beltrán——!

HIPPOLITO. And here they come.
(*The door, centre, opens, and* BEATRIZ *and* BELTRAN *enter, he with his arm round her. She is wearing a loose morning-gown.*)
At last, my Beatriz!

BEATRIZ. Good morning, father!
(*She kisses him, then sees* DE FLORES, *with a little start.*)
Miguel! returned!

DE FLORES (*bowing*). My lady!

BEATRIZ. You are welcome.

HIPPOLITO (*indicating* GEDEON).
This gentleman awaits you, Beatriz—
Don Manuel's brother——

BEATRIZ. Manuel's!
A mute exchange of glances between her and DE FLORES.

GEDEON. Gedeón
De Merlo, at your service.

BEATRIZ. I have heard
Your brother speak of you.

HIPPOLITO. He comes, my daughter,
On a strange errand——

GEDEON. Manuel has vanished.

BEATRIZ. Vanished!

BELTRAN. Don Manuel vanished!

BEATRIZ. Sailed he not
With you, De Flores, to Mallorca?

DE FLORES. No,
Not on the *Esperanza*, lady.

BEATRIZ. Then
Where has he gone?

GEDEON. That, lady, is the riddle
We come to solve. You, as I hear, received
A letter from him.

BEATRIZ. An insulting letter.

GEDEON. Have you it, madam?

BEATRIZ. Nay, I scattered it
In fragments to the winds.

GEDEON. Knew you his writing?
Was it his hand that penned it?

BEATRIZ. Nay, I know not—
It bore his name. He was no lyric lover—
He wooed me not with madrigals or sonnets.
This rude, splenetic missive was the first
He ever writ me.

GEDEON. And he said——?

BEATRIZ. He said
My shrewishness—mark you, Señor—my shrewishness
Had wearied him: he would no more endure it:
He would return, that very night, to Palma,
Where longed and pined for him a noble lady,

Of beauty greater, wealth scarce less, than mine—
Oh, 'twas a miracle of courtesy,
Your brother's letter.

GEDEON. Was't my brother's letter?

BEATRIZ. Whose else?

GEDEON. Perchance——

BEATRIZ. Perchance——?

GEDEON. His murderer's.

HIPPOLITO. }
BELTRAN. } His murderer's! (*Pause.*)

BEATRIZ. Think you he has been murdered?

GEDEON. I know not, lady, what to think—I know
That since that night no human eye has seen him.

BEATRIZ. No human eye——!

HIPPOLITO. The thing's incredible—
Impossible! Why, who should murder him?
And wherefore?

BEATRIZ. You, Señor Ottavio,
You knew his life—was there no enemy—
No vengeful husband, or no woman wrong'd,
That might desire his death?

OTTAVIO (*embarrassed*). There may have been.

BEATRIZ. Yet I, for my part, cannot think him dead.
Since he is not in Palma, Don Gedeón,
I counsel you to search Madrid and Seville,
The taverns and the bowers of revelry—
His pleasant wont it was to boast his fame
In haunts like these.

GEDEON. We but waste time in guesses.
Alive or dead, our business is to find him.
First to the harbour—come, Ottavio—
We'll seek the messenger that bore his letter.

HIPPOLITO. I, Don Gedeón, will go along with you—
There I know all men, and all men know me.
Come you, too, son-in-law?

BELTRAN. Right willingly,
My father. (*To* GEDEON) I, Señor, loved not your brother—
He was my rival for this lady's hand,
The noblest prize in Spain or Christendom.
Yet heartily I trust 'twas no mischance,
Much less foul play, that cleared the path for me
To this, my happiness.

GEDEON (*bowing*). You are courteous, sir.
(*To* HIPPOLITO)
Shall we set forth?

HIPPOLITO. Have with you!

OTTAVIO (*plucks* GEDEON *by the sleeve and whispers*). Don Gedeón!
That man—De Cabra—now I know him! He
Threatened Don Manuel and wellnigh struck him
The day he disappeared.

GEDEON (*whispers*). So! So! No more!
We'll keep an eye on him!

BELTRAN (*embracing her and whispering*). My Beatriz!
My treasure! For an hour I leave you, sweet—
You give me furlough?

BEATRIZ. For an hour, Beltrán—
I grant no longer respite from my love.
Adieu, mine own! (*They kiss and part.*)

DE FLORES *has been standing near the door,* R., *glaring at them. He starts when* HIPPOLITO *addresses him.*

HIPPOLITO. The story of your mission
Must wait until I come again, De Flores.

Exit, R., *with* GEDEON; BELTRAN *following; last* OTTAVIO.

Having carefully closed the door after them, DE FLORES *walks straight up to* BEATRIZ.

DE FLORES. So, you are married, lady!

BEATRIZ. So it seems.
Does that offend you? You look thunderous,
As though I had wronged you!

DE FLORES (*half to himself*). Fool! insensate fool!
I might have known. . . . Indeed I did suspect
Your haste to rid yourself of Manuel,
But dreamt not you would be so lightning-swift.

BEATRIZ. I thought you had divined. . . . You said that nought
Escaped your eye——

DE FLORES. Your cunning had put blinkers
On the one eye you had left me.

BEATRIZ. Cunning? Nay,
I owed you no account of my designs.

DE FLORES (*to himself, but audibly*).
Hoodwinked! My triumph tainted!

BEATRIZ. Why, what mean you?
But tell me first, and quickly—is there danger?
Will they discover——? Can they find the man
That bore the letter?

DE FLORES. Nay, I fear not that.
He was an outland sailor, here to-day
And gone to-morrow. If they *did* unearth him,
He knew not me—scarce saw me—all he saw
Was the moidore I gave him.

BEATRIZ. All is safe then.
And now for your reward, my good Miguel.

DE FLORES. Aye, my reward.

BEATRIZ. We must not be too hasty—
The estate is yours—with all my heart I give it:
But I must win my lord's consent.

DE FLORES. Your lord's?

BEATRIZ. My husband's.

DE FLORES. Aye, your husband's! So you think
Your husband will consent to my reward?

BEATRIZ. He can deny me nothing—have but patience
A month or twain, and Alcobar is yours.

DE FLORES. Pooh! Alcobar!

BEATRIZ. What mean you?

DE FLORES. Do you mock me?
Think you for Alcobar I sold my soul?

BEATRIZ. Your looks are strange, Miguel.

DE FLORES. Come, answer me!
Think you I sold my soul for Alcobar?

BEATRIZ. Your soul, Miguel! Have you, then, no religion?
Has Holy Church no pardon for our sins?
Are you an atheist?

DE FLORES. I believe in hell—
I long have lived in't, Beatriz Juana!

BEATRIZ. You call me——! Do you dare to——? You forget
Your place, De Flores. I am still your mistress,
Your lady.

DE FLORES. Lady here and mistress there—
The time for that is past. We are man and woman;
And 'tis for woman man will risk damnation.
I told you so!

BEATRIZ. You said so, I remember—
And I replied: the lord of Alcobar
Can wed with whom he will.

DE FLORES. Can pick and choose,
You said: 'mong all the ladies of the province
Can pick and choose——

BEATRIZ. Why, so he can!

DE FLORES. You have said it!
And, Beatriz Juana, I choose—you!
She gazes at him in speechless astonishment, then bursts out laughing.

BEATRIZ. Me! Me! The jest is priceless! Now I see
Why it was gall to you to find me married!
You saw yourself—the very thought on't makes me
Tingle with shame—you saw yourself my husband!
But, think you, were I ne'er so free, my father
Would see his daughter with his steward wed?
Curb your presumption, sir!

DE FLORES. The day might come
When on his knees your father should implore me
To wed you.

BEATRIZ. Are you mad?

DE FLORES. But my presumption,
E'en were you free, would scarcely soar at once
To marriage. In a month or two, mayhap,
To think on't might no longer make you tingle
With shame. But marriage was no vital point
In my design. I would have been—I *am*—
At first content with—love.

BEATRIZ. With love?

DE FLORES. Or would you
Prefer another name for it? I care not—
You know my meaning.

BEATRIZ. Nay, I know it not!
You *have* no meaning! You are fever'd—frenzied—
'Tis your delirium speaks.

DE FLORES. Yes, I am fever'd,
And you shall slake my thirst. Your pride, your petulance,
Your glorious body and your evil soul
Are mine to work my will with! *He* your lord,
That petty squireling who has stolen my first-fruits!

I, Beatriz Juana, am your master,
And you shall know it.

BEATRIZ (*moving towards her room*). When your wits return
We'll speak again.

DE FLORES (*grips her arm*). Yes, we shall speak again
In soft seclusion, amorous secrecy—
But now we part not till you tell me—when?

BEATRIZ. I'll shriek for help!

DE FLORES. Aye, do! arouse the household!
And when they come, we'll send for Don Gedeón
De Merlo, for your father, and we'll tell them
Where they may find Don Manuel.

BEATRIZ. Would you, madman,
Bare your own neck to the garrote?

DE FLORES. My neck
Runs little risk. Remember, they will find him
With your stiletto sticking 'twixt his ribs.
My hands are clean. I did but chance upon you
When all was over. At the utmost, I
Was your accomplice in the after-fact,
Disposing of the body; and of that
I purge my conscience in denouncing you.

BEATRIZ. But if I tell the utter truth!

DE FLORES. You have nought
To prove it! Who'll believe that you could bribe me
The faithful servant, virtuous De Flores,
To risk his soul and body for a farm,
A few poor roods of land? Who would suspect
I staked my soul and body to win yours?

BEATRIZ. Thou fiend!

DE FLORES. And if, at worst, you were believed,
We'd go to death together. When I saw you
Come from yon chamber, radiant, drunk with love,
Clasped in another's arms, an iron will

Possessed me, and I swore that death itself
Were a small price to pay for poisoning,
Or ending, those delights.

BEATRIZ. Sure, I am dreaming!
This cannot be my faithful, good Miguel,
My kind De Flores! You are playing with me.
To punish me for some imagined slur,
You seek to affright me. (*Kneeling.*) See, I kneel to you—
Say you but jested! We were friends of old——

DE FLORES. Friends!

BEATRIZ. And henceforth your fortune, your advancement,
Shall be my care. The lands of Alcobar
Are but an earnest of the gifts I'll shower
Upon you.

DE FLORES. Will you give me back my eye?

BEATRIZ. That old mischance! How can you be so wicked?

DE FLORES. Wicked! Were there a crown for wickedness,
Which of us two would wear it, gentle lady?
Stand up! You may be seen. None must suspect
Our tender secret. For the time, at least,
We must guard warily our stolen joys.
Where shall we meet—and when?

BEATRIZ (*who has risen*). Inhuman wretch!
What joy can it afford you to torment me?
What pleasure from my loathing can you reap?
You spoke of love—I hate you, hate you, hate you!
Am I a woman—ask yourself—whose hatred
A man would choose to earn, if he were wise?

DE FLORES. Wise? Who is wise that hungers for revenge?
E'en as a child, your pride, your cruelty,
Were hateful to me, while your beauty stung me
With vague unrest. Then, in your budding girlhood—
How old were you? Thirteen? Fourteen? I know not—

One day your humble slave "forgot his place,"
And ventured impiously to kiss your hand.
Your switch so fierily avenged the insult
(For even then you were a strapping wench)
That I became a Polypheme, a scarecrow,
A wretch that women shrank from—while my lady
Thought with a few soft words to buy my pardon!
From that time, as he watched your beauty grow,
With arrogant self-worship hand in hand,
The scarecrow swore that one day there should be
One woman who should shrink from him in vain.
That day has come—an all-just Providence
Has lured you on to place yourself, my beauty,
Defenceless in my hands—and now, by heaven!
I'll drain the sweet, sweet cup of love and hate,
Of mingled lust and vengeance, to the dregs.
Where shall we meet—and when?

BEATRIZ, *during this speech, has sunk upon the couch and hidden her face in her hands. After a perceptible pause, she looks up.*

BEATRIZ. My good De Flores,
A demon has possessed you. Presently
You will arouse yourself and cast him out,
And wonder at your madness. Meantime, I—
To show I trust your better self, and know
Your wholesome mind will soon return to you—
I'll speak with you—I'll plead with you—again.

DE FLORES. You'll speak? You'll plead? You'll waste your breath.

BEATRIZ. Hush! Hush!
I will not hear. My father rides to-day—
My husband with him—to the hunting-lodge
At Liria. They hunt all day to-morrow,
And come again at evening. Thus to-night
I am alone. When all the house is still,
Come hither. For the wrong that once I did you,
I will devise some princely recompense

That leaves my honour stainless, and your soul,
De Flores, unbefouled with hideous crime.
So let it be, I pray you!

DE FLORES. I will come
When all the house is still. You have wit, my lady,
To match your beauty. You are worth the winning!
By heaven, I'd give my other eye for you!
[*With an ironic bow, he goes off*, R.

BEATRIZ. You shall, and more, wild beast!
(*She paces distractedly up and down, then flings herself on her knees at the prie-dieu, and seems to pray for a moment. Presently she springs up again and strikes a bell which stands on the table.* CAMILLA *enters*, R.)
Lay out, Camilla,
My velvet gown. My lord will soon return.

CAMILLA. I will, my lady. (*Going towards centre.*)

BEATRIZ. Stay, Camilla—tell me—
That letter that you brought me from Don Manuel,
When came it to your hand?

CAMILLA. That morning early,
While you were yet abed.

BEATRIZ. The morning, was't not,
After the *Esperanza* sailed?

CAMILLA. It was.
The sailor met me as I went to mass,
At the outer gate—I brought it to you straightway.

BEATRIZ. Right, right. And had you noted aught amiss
That night?

CAMILLA. I had noted nothing.

BEATRIZ. You slept soundly,
As I did?

CAMILLA. Yes—we both were tired, my lady—
We had waked the night before, when Don Beltrán
Spoke with you at the window.

BEATRIZ. I remember.
The velvet gown, Camilla. [CAMILLA *exit, centre.*
Nought to fear
On that side! (*She again kneels at the prie-dieu.*)
(*Enter,* R., DON BELTRAN, *followed by* PABLO, *to whom he gives his hat and sword. Exit* PABLO. BEATRIZ, *hearing the door open, springs up and rushes to him.*)
Oh, thank God you have returned,
Beltrán! My own! No evil has befallen you?

BELTRAN. My Beatriz! Why these affrighted eyes?
This panting breast?

BEATRIZ. I live not in your absence,
My knight! my paladin!

BELTRAN. You speak as though
I came from high exploits in paynim lands,
Or rescuing the Holy Sepulchre.

BEATRIZ. You mock my fond disquietude! Nay, nay,
It is not well, sir!

BELTRAN. What has fluttered you,
My quivering bird?

BEATRIZ. First tell me—at the harbour
Found they no trace of Manuel?

BELTRAN. Never a sign.
He left a gay carousal—left alone—
An hour ere midnight, and was seen no more.

BEATRIZ. Oh me! I am frighted!

BELTRAN. What have you to fear,
My Beatriz?

BEATRIZ. There are evil men abroad,
And deeds of darkness have been done.

BELTRAN. My love!
My lady! What has scared you? Am not I
Here at your side? What evil should you fear?
Come men or demons, I for you will face them!

BEATRIZ. Demons! Aye, that's the word!

BELTRAN. What mean you, dear one?

BEATRIZ. I have seen a demon!

BELTRAN. Tell me, what has changed you?
'Tis not an hour since you were gay and happy,
My adored, my radiant bride.

BEATRIZ. A hideous thing
Has breathed upon me, and has left my soul
Besmirched.

BELTRAN. A hideous thing!

BEATRIZ. You know that man—
Intendant, steward—nay, I know not what—
My father's favourite——?

BELTRAN. De Flores?

BEATRIZ. He!

BELTRAN. I have seen him—scarcely more—an ugly fellow—
But Don Hippolito highly prizes him.

BEATRIZ. He is a villain, an accursed villain!
He hates me!

BELTRAN. Hates you? Wherefore?

BEATRIZ. In my childhood,
By pure mischance, I caused him lose his eye.

BELTRAN. Therefore he nurses malice?

BEATRIZ. More than malice—
A devilish vengefulness.

BELTRAN. He has frighted you?
This very day, your father, doubt it not,
Will send him packing.

BEATRIZ. Oh, you know not yet
The abysses of his wickedness.

BELTRAN. Say on!
He shall pay dear——

BEATRIZ. I think—I cannot tell—
I think that Manuel indeed was murdered—
And by De Flores.

BELTRAN. Beatriz! What say you?
Is't possible? He has a villainous air,
'Tis true. Well, if it be so, you are rid of him
The easier.

BEATRIZ. Aye, but you know not yet—
The fiend—the hell-hound—he accuses me—
Me!—of the deed.

BELTRAN. Great God in heaven! The wretch
Is mad! The fetters and the whip for him
Are all too merciful! My poor, poor dove!
Frighted by such a vulture!

BEATRIZ. I must tell you—
Some time ago, I lost a jewelled dagger,
A small stiletto——

BELTRAN. I have seen you wear it—
A toy!

BEATRIZ. This villain must have stolen it.
He knows—or so he says—where Manuel's corse
Lies—with my dagger slain——

BELTRAN. A hellish plot,
But brainsick! It can but recoil upon him.
Trust me, he dare not carry it to the end—
He would wring money from you—nothing more.

BEATRIZ. Not money—no!

BELTRAN. Preferment, then!

BEATRIZ. Beltrán—
Oh, let me hide my face, my love, my husband,
Here, in your breast! The fiend would have me yield—
Yield—to his lust——

BELTRAN. My sword! Where is it? Pablo!
He dies upon the instant! God in heaven!

The world's polluted wherein such a thing,
So vile, so infamous, but breathes the air!
He shall not breathe it long!

He is rushing to the door, R., *but* BEATRIZ *holds him back.*

BEATRIZ. Nay, dearest love,
Have patience! If you slew him instantly,
'Twould seem a murder—you must needs account for't.
How innocent so e'er, the very scandal
Would soil my name. But if a husband slays
Upon the threshold of his bridal chamber
A midnight ravisher—all the world applauds,
Nor seeks a further reason.

BELTRAN. True! Aye, true!
It irks me he should live another hour—
But I'll be patient.

BEATRIZ. I have laid a trap for him.

BELTRAN. How? Tell me how?

BEATRIZ. I feigned a half consent——

BELTRAN. Oh, Beatriz! That you could stoop so far
Even as that!

BEATRIZ. I feared his instant violence—
Else had I ne'er——

BELTRAN. Forgive!—you had no choice—
And then——?

BEATRIZ. You know my father rides to-night
To Liria, to the hunting-lodge——

BELTRAN. I know it.

BEATRIZ. I said you too were riding to the hunt,
And therefore he would find me here alone,
At midnight——

BELTRAN. Dearly shall the caitiff pay
For so far humbling you——!

BEATRIZ. Now, my Beltrán,
You with my father must indeed ride forth,
But secretly return, and gain unseen
The ambush of our chamber——

BELTRAN. Aye, the ambush!
I love not hiding, love not setting traps.

BEATRIZ. Would you make war on vermin chivalrously?

BELTRAN. My Beatriz—what a sulphurous thundercloud
Has marred the sunshine of our wedded bliss!
But soon the jaws of hell, whence it arose,
Shall suck it back again.

BEATRIZ (*embraces him*). My knight! My champion!
If thy love shield me, I am safe indeed!
(*She strikes the bell.*)
'Twere best that you make known to all the household
Your purpose to desert me—
(*Half playfully, half tenderly*) to desert me,
My love!—to-night.
Enter CAMILLA, *centre.*
Send Pablo to my lord,
Camilla. [*Exit,* CAMILLA, R.

BELTRAN. Ere I kill him, I must wring
Confession from him of Don Manuel's fate—
Of where, and how, he slew him.

BEATRIZ. Nay, dear love—
E'en with his dying breath he'll spit forth poison,
Falsehood and calumny! What is Manuel
To you and me? Think only of our love,
And, like a sudden thunderbolt from heaven,
Sweep from our path this foul contamination,
This cankerous blight!
Enter PABLO, R.

PABLO. You sent for me, my lord?

BELTRAN. Pablo, I ride with Don Hippolito
To Liria to-day. Bid my groom saddle
My Arab gelding——

PABLO. Pardon me, Señor—
The horse is lame—Fabio this morning told me——

BELTRAN. The best horse in my stable—what has lamed him?
I must myself go look to it. Come with me,
My Beatriz——

BEATRIZ. Nay, I am weary, dearest—
I'll rest me till you come again——

BELTRAN. Farewell, then,
A little space. (*Bending over her and whispering*)
Let not this hateful thing
Weigh on your soul. My love is all around you,
A magic robe no ill can penetrate.
Rest, dearest heart!
Kisses her, and exit, R., PABLO *following.*

BEATRIZ. Rest! rest! Could I but rest!
(*She paces up and down, then picks up a guitar on the table,* R., *throws herself on the couch and touches a few chords. She soon lets it fall to the ground, and calls loudly:*)
Camilla!
CAMILLA *appears in the opening of the door, centre.*

CAMILLA. Here, my lady!

BEATRIZ. Not the velvet—
That is too hot. Lay out the gold brocade,
The Venice ruff—dost mark?

CAMILLA. I will, my lady.
[*Withdraws and closes the door.*
BEATRIZ *rises, goes towards the centre door, stops, gazes at the threshold, and says in a fierce whisper.*

BEATRIZ. Here will he lie, and bleed—and bleed—and bleed
His soul out!
DE FLORES *appears outside the barred window, looks warily around, and says, in a low voice.*

DE FLORES. Beatriz Juana! Hist!

BEATRIZ *starts violently and turns towards him.*

BEATRIZ. You here! What would you?

DE FLORES. I would reassure
Your fearful spirit. I have seen to it
That solitude and secrecy shall reign
To-night. The most part of the serving-men
Go hunting with your father. For the rest
I have bidden them at the tavern hold fandango
In honour of my prosperous return.
'Twould be inhuman to forbid Camilla
To join the revels. You will grant her leave.
So shall the silent midnight be our own,
Nor any tremor mar our—conference.

BEATRIZ. You are, then, ruthless?

DE FLORES. I am resolute.
Long years have I lived only for this night.
My hour has come at last. [*He goes.*

BEATRIZ. Your hour has come!

The Curtain falls.

ACT THIRD

The hall, as in Act II. The candles in the chandelier are lighted, and a candlestick with two lighted candles stands on the table. There is thus bright light in the centre, but dusk in the corners of the room. Moonlight without.

BEATRIZ *discovered walking restlessly up and down. A guitar is heard at some distance, off* L. *She goes to the window. A troop of ten or twelve men and women passes, carrying lanterns. One of them is playing the guitar.*

A VOICE (*without*). The Lady Beatriz!

BEATRIZ. Is it you, Diego?
You go a-revelling?

THE VOICE. Señor de Flores
Has made a fiesta for us.

BEATRIZ. Well, good night!
Good night, Pepita!

A WOMAN'S VOICE. Sleep well, gracious lady!

The revellers pass on, singing. BEATRIZ *again walks up and down. Her back is turned to the door,* R., *when* CAMILLA *opens it. She wears a mantilla and is dressed for the feast.* BEATRIZ *turns with a little scream.*

BEATRIZ. Camilla! You! The others all are gone—
Hark to their song!

CAMILLA. I follow them—it hastes not.
Shall I not make your toilet for the night?

BEATRIZ. Nay; I am wakeful; when I cannot sleep,
You know, I love not to lie cribb'd in bed,
Tossing. I'll go to rest when I am weary.
Good night. The dance awaits you.

CAMILLA. At the least,
Shall I not light the candles in your chamber?

BEATRIZ (*interposing between her and the door*).
They are already lit.

CAMILLA. You are not afraid,
Alone, in this great house?

BEATRIZ. What should I fear?
Go, go, Camilla!

CAMILLA. Then, good night, my lady.

Exit CAMILLA, R. BEATRIZ *goes to the window. Presently* CAMILLA, *carrying a lantern, is vaguely seen to pass.* BEATRIZ *waves her hand to her. After a pause, she goes rapidly up to the centre door, and throws both wings wide open.* BELTRAN *is revealed, silhouetted against a dim light, standing like a statue, resting his hands on his drawn sword.*

BEATRIZ. They all are gone. Your sword is drawn—the sword
Of justice, not of vengeance, my Beltrán.
His death is doubly just. You free the world,
Not of a ravisher only, but a murderer.
Remember that!

BELTRAN. No more, my Beatriz.
Sometimes the fates impose on us such deeds
As must be done, not spoken of, not thought on.

BEATRIZ. I am silent. I will draw the curtains.
(*Leaving the door open, she draws the heavy curtains across the doorway.*)
(*To herself*)
Come quickly now! Come quickly! Oh, come quickly!

She seats herself on the couch, but, unable to keep still, rises again and kneels at the prie-dieu, her back to the door, R.

The door opens slowly and DE FLORES *steals in, wearing a sword and dagger. He slips up behind her, but not quite noiselessly. She does not affect to be startled.*

DE FLORES (*in a low voice*).
Sweet saint, forgive! My love's importunacy
Is indiscreet, and makes me an intruder
On your devotions. I will bide your leisure.
I well conceive, in truth, it needs some time
To make your peace with heaven.

BEATRIZ (*rising*). Mock me not,
And mock not heaven! Surely you are come
To tell me you desist from this black crime,
This impious, this abhorrent villainy?
Say that 'tis so!

DE FLORES. Desist! What anchorite,
What heavenly archangel, were he here—
Here, in the silent night, alone with you—
Your beauty with repugnance all aglow—
Could put the cup of nectar from his lips
Untasted? Have you no compassion, lady,
For all my years of love?

BEATRIZ. You mean of hate!

Down to this point both have spoken almost in a whisper. DE FLORES *now raises his voice.*

DE FLORES. Hatred and love—two faces of one coin,
Two edges of one blade. Enough! You are mine!
I woo not,—I command! The sacrament
Of crime unites us——

BEATRIZ (*snatches up a fan from the couch, and strikes him on the mouth*). Liar!

DE FLORES. Once too oft
Already you have struck me! Come! An end to this,
My mistress!

He seizes her, and drags her towards the doorway, centre. The curtains part, and BELTRAN *stands on the threshold.*

BELTRAN. Ruffian, draw. I will not murder
Even a murderer!

(De Flores *draws, and they exchange some passes.* Beltran *breaks* De Flores' *guard and lunges at him. His sword-blade snaps, three or four inches from the point.*)

My sword is broken!

(*A moment of perplexity.*)

Ha! I see it all! He wears a shirt of mail!

Beatriz. Great God!

De Flores (*still on his guard*). 'Tis true! A shirt of Milan steel.
I knew my lady apt at setting snares,
And came as half-expectant of an ambush,
Or even a dagger-thrust from her own fair hand.

Beatriz (*clinging to* Beltran).
Kill him! He must not live!

De Flores. A pointless blade
Is not a formidable weapon, madam—
His lordship's life is more in jeopardy
Than mine. But fear not—it is not my cue
To kill him, if, as I am bold to hope,
He'll list to reason. We may come to terms
With swords unblooded.

Beatriz. Hear him not, Beltrán!
He lies! He lies!

Beltran. Be calm, dear love, be calm!
He cannot lie away my faith in you.
I loathe to parley with him; but, dear heart,
Setting a snare, we have abased ourselves
Nigh to his level, and are tangled in't.

De Flores. Call we a truce, then!

He sheathes his sword. Beltran *throws his down on the table.*

Beatriz. Oh, the shame of it,
Beltrán! I saw in you my swift avenger;
And lo! my avenger has become my judge.
I am at the bar, and you must patiently

Hear my accuser,—vilest of the vile—
With infamous calumnies befoul my name.
It shall not be! I will rather end myself—
Thus——

She snatches the dagger from her husband's belt and makes as though to stab herself. He at once seizes her wrist and disarms her.

BELTRAN. Why this frenzy, Beatriz, my own?
With me you are safe.

He leads her to a chair, but she slips off it to her knees, and clings to his hand, imploring him.

BEATRIZ. Then let us fly from here!
Wipe from our memories this hideous day
And night! We'll cross the sea. In Sicily
My father has a palace. There we'll find,
After this storm, a safe, a tranquil haven.
What though this villain go unpublished? Must we
To vengeful justice sacrifice our peace,
Our new-found happiness? Leave him to his fate!
It will not tarry. Heaven ordains for him
Some sudden, shameful end. But let me never
Look on his face again!

BELTRAN *has sunk into the chair. She rests her face upon his knee. He strokes her hair.*

BELTRAN. My Beatriz,
My wife! You are o'erwrought. Trust, love, to me.
We must not fly from calumny, we must crush it.
Think of your father—should we let his trust
In such a man as this remain unshaken?
We must not, howsoe'er we loathe the task,
Leave such a snake unscotched.

DE FLORES. You have not the choice—
Take horse—take ship—to-night—this very hour—
You cannot shake me off, my haughty lady!

BELTRAN. This is a shameless ruffian, Beatriz—
I think, a madman—leave him, dear, to me.
Go to your chamber, trust in me——

BEATRIZ. No, no!
I will not go, Beltrán! I know too well
His devilish cunning. Let me rather rise
And meet it, face to face! (*Springs to her feet.*) My
woman's weakness
Thus I shake off! Here, at her husband's side,
Stands Beatriz Juana de Urgel,
Strong in her innocence. Come, sir, begin—
Let loose your hornet's nest of perjuries
To your own ruin.

DE FLORES. If a front of brass
Meant innocence, I know of old, my lady,
No saint were half so innocent as you.

BELTRAN. No more! What have you, sir, to say?

DE FLORES. Why, this—
You know the well out yonder in the garden,
The well whereof the earthquake drank the water,
And shook the canopy——

BELTRAN. Yes, yes, I know it.

DE FLORES. To-morrow let the alguazils be summoned,
And bid them bring some dozen fathoms of cord,
And search its depth.

BELTRAN. What then?

DE FLORES. Why, there they'll find
All that was mortal of Don Manuel—
All, understand me, that the worms have left.

BELTRAN. You say this——

DE FLORES. I were mad to tell a lie
So easy of disproof. I think the lady
Will scarce deny it.

BEATRIZ. Nay, I question not
That *he*, of all men living, knows 'tis true—
And reason good.

DE FLORES. Yes, reason good—, for I
Helped, I confess it, to bestow the body—
The murd'ress lacked the strength.

BELTRAN. Murd'ress! You mean——

DE FLORES. I mean this woman.

BELTRAN. You are raving!

DE FLORES. Wait,
And weigh my proofs. Her very artfulness
Entrapped her. She took care no pool of blood,
No crimson on her garments, should betray her—
Wherefore she left her dagger to seal up
The gash it made—deep in her victim's heart—
And in his heart the alguazils will find it—
A jewelled plaything, beautiful, but deadly:
The maggots have no teeth for gems and steel.
(*A pause.*)
That dagger's voice will——

BEATRIZ. Fix the crime on you,
Who stole the toy! Camilla knows—we missed it
Just at that time. 'Tis crystal-clear! He had forged
A two-edged plot. He hated Manuel,
Who used him as a lackey, insolently:
And me he hated—I have told you why.
He thought one well-aimed blow would glut his rancour,
And place me at his mercy. He confessed it!
He dreamed—the frantic dream were laughable
If I could laugh; like a death's-head it grins at me—
He dreamed a madman's dream of wedding me.
And when, to-day, *that* part of his design
Vanished in air, he all the more resolved
To venture all, to play upon my fears,
And make of me his slave.

BELTRAN. The plot was mad
Indeed!

DE FLORES. Too mad to be believed. 'Tis but
The coinage of her cunning, her despair.

BELTRAN. By your own witness you were an accomplice
In a black deed——

DE FLORES. The deed was done ere I
Or knew or dreamed of it. Passing the gate,
I heard a cry, a gurgling moan, and saw
A white thing in the moonlight, by the well.
Thither I hasted, and behold! my lady
Stood, half distracted, at the dead man's side.
What should I do? Alarm the house, the town?
Give up my master's daughter to the gallows?
That had been loyalty indeed——

BELTRAN. What boots it
To prate of loyalty? You have once for all
Thrown off the mask. Why make a poor pretence
To put it on again? The time is past
For smug hypocrisy.

DE FLORES (*shrugging his shoulders*). Most true, Señor!
What would you? Rooted habits cling like burs
Or bird-lime. To be frank, then—I perceived
Straightway the blessed opportunity
For which I long had yearned. Should I give up
The murd'ress to the law? Where were my profit?
To see her strangled?—What had that availed me?
How weak the hate that's satisfied with slaying!
My thirst for vengeance claimed for its assuagement
The woman living, not the woman dead——

BELTRAN. Be silent, slave!

BEATRIZ. Beltrán! My own Beltrán—
Why parley with a devil self-proclaimed?
He tells you this and that—invents a fable
Imputing his own infamy to me:
And offers you for proof—oh impudence!
Oh childishness! his word, his oath at need,
That my lost dagger rests in Manuel's heart.
'Tis like it may! He filched it and he used it!
Which do you trust—this miscreant or your wife?

BELTRAN. My Beatriz! Poor tortured Beatriz,
Here ends your ordeal! To your chamber, sweet!

Take with you my unalterable love
My faith immovable. I will deal anon
With this—— (*Leading her to the door, centre.*)

DE FLORES. Before the lady goes, my lord,
Hear one last word, I pray.

BELTRAN. Say on. Be brief.

DE FLORES. Manuel was seen alive, and flushed with wine,
An hour ere midnight on Saint Julian's eve,
And ne'er was seen again; and now his body
Lies (you believe me *so* far?) in the well
A stone's-throw hence. Suppose 'twere true I slew him—
Did I waylay him at the tavern door,
A mile away, and bear his body hither?
Did I invite the insolent cub, my foe,
To sally forth upon a moonlight ramble
As friend with friend, and lure him to the spot
Appointed for his end? Shortly, how came he
That midnight into Don Hippolito's garden?
The wall is high, the gate is locked——

BEATRIZ. You held
A key to it!

DE FLORES. Perhaps. But would Don Manuel
From a carousal, think you, break away
To roam with me the garden solitudes
And serenade the moon?

BEATRIZ. Who knows what lie
You may have told him to entice him hither?
Since he was but a means to work my ruin,
I the true victim of your plot. Oh, me!
What nameless infamies may this slave have forged
To bait the trap for Manuel? Wherefore seek
To drag them to the light——?
She draws BELTRAN *away towards the door.*

DE FLORES (*producing a folded paper*). Hold, Don Beltrán!
Here is the bait that trapped Don Manuel.
This paper from the bosom of his doublet

Dropped as I raised his corse. I picked it up
And treasured it.

He holds it out to BELTRAN. BEATRIZ *makes a dash at it, while* DE FLORES *keeps it out of her clutches.*

BEATRIZ. Beltrán! My own Beltrán!
Read it not! Touch it not! Oh, if you love me,
Destroy it! 'Tis some devilish forgery
The villain has devised.

DE FLORES. Surely, my lord,
The lady's strangely moved. 'Twould almost seem
As though she recognized the missive. Take it!
If it be counterfeit, as she declares,
You will at once detect it.

BELTRAN (*takes it and looks at the superscription*). Beatriz,
This is indeed your hand. Too well I know it
To be mistaken.
(*Reads*) "To my well-beloved betrothed, Señor
Don Manuel de Merlo—these with haste."
Shall I open it
And read the rest?

BEATRIZ. If your immovable faith
Is shaken, your unalterable love
Is altered: if a juggling villain's wiles
Weigh with you more than love, and trust, and faith,
And your poor wife's entreaties: open it,
And take the consequence!

BELTRAN. Your words are wild,
My lady. If the rest be innocent
He stands confounded: and if counterfeit,
Or garbled, we together will detect
The imposture.

DE FLORES. Look on her, Señor, and say
Which of us dreads the issue—I,—or she?

BELTRAN (*reads*). "I repent me, dear my lord, of the wanton mood that led me this morning to misuse your worthiness. I would fain make my peace with you: and to

that end, if you forgive me, I will await you, at midnight, in the garden, by the ruined well. The gate shall be opened to you. Show but your greatness of spirit in pardoning my waywardness, and I will make all the amends a woman may.

BEATRIZ JUANA."

(*He holds out the letter to her.*)

Is this your writing, lady? (*She is silent.*)
I perceive
No mark of fraud. In truth a modest missive
Of invitation to an amorous meeting!
To whom addressed? To whom? As I bethink me,
To one whom, but a few short hours before,
You had begged me to entangle in a quarrel,
And basely slay! Oh God! can this be true?
Can any woman, born of woman, be
At once so fair without and foul within?
(*Looking at the paper.*)
Oh, it is cunning! With a wanton's art
She takes the measure of her wretched dupe,
And lays for a coarse mind a coarser bait.
None but a pitiful vainglorious fool
Had been decoyed by it! Oh me, oh me!
In what an eddy of the flaming gulf
Of hell are we three whirling!

BEATRIZ. Surely, surely,
You cannot think 'twas I that struck the blow!

BELTRAN. Why not? The hand, so cunning to betray,
Might well be strong to kill.

BEATRIZ. Beltrán, Beltrán!
My husband!—hear the truth, the very truth—
By all the saints in heaven I swear to tell it!

DE FLORES. The woman's raving!

BEATRIZ. See! he quails before me—
'Tis he, not I, that now stands terror-stricken.

DE FLORES. Pooh! What have I to fear? Say on, my lady.

BELTRAN. Say on! To lips so voluble in lies,
The truth, no doubt, is as a foreign tongue,
Uncouth of utterance. Yet when lies avail
No longer——

BEATRIZ. Oh, Beltrán, you are cruel, cruel!
All that I did, I did for love of you—
Thankless and pitiless you! Don Manuel,
Hateful at best, grew loathsome when he stood
Between me and your love. You might, Beltrán,
Have honourably cleared him from our path——

BELTRAN. Honourably! Great God!

BEATRIZ. Some pettiness of soul
Restrained you, and you left the task to me.
Mine was the weaker arm, but stronger heart.
To this base instrument I turned—yet knew not
How fathomless his baseness. I believed him
A trusty servant, and I promised him
A fair estate, a lordly heritage,
If at one blow he would rid the world and me
Of one he had scarce less cause to hate than I.
The traitor, the dissembler, played with me,
And led me on——

DE FLORES. "Led you"——? Poor innocent!
'Twas little leading-on you needed!

BELTRAN. Silence!

BEATRIZ. He plotted from the outset to beguile me
Into his power. He begged of me my dagger;
He lured me on to write to Manuel
This heedless letter. Oh! he moulded me
Like wax, to his accurst, abhorrent ends.
I was a fool, a weak, confiding fool—
But, when he says I struck the blow, he lies!
I never left my chamber. In the moonlight,
I saw him do the deed—and I exulted,
Not that my enemy was dead, but—oh,
My love! my husband!—that the way was cleared

For our great love—the way to your dear arms!
Yes, I have sinned!. Yes, I have jeopardised
My soul! But, oh, Beltrán, it was for you!
I was a woman, and I loved! Can you,
Of all men you, condemn me? And what other
Need ever know? Was it my fault, dear love,
That in a villain's loathly spider's web,
I was thus piteously enmeshed?

BELTRAN (*to* DE FLORES). Is this
At last the truth?

DE FLORES (*shrugging his shoulders*). Suppose it be—what then?

(*He snatches up the letter from the floor where* BELTRAN *has dropped it and places it in his breast.*)

If you denounce me, in the self-same breath
You send my lady to the scaffold! Both of you
Are at my mercy. Oh, I grant you, sir,
I must not overstrain my power. To goad you
Too far might make you do, in desperation,
Things fatal to all three of us. Fear not, then,
That I will rudely tyrannise, and mar
The delicate balance of our mutual league
And compact. Each of us at the other's throat
Holds, so to say, a poniard. What of that?
Since nought but ill can come of enmity,
Let us try amity, and a firm resolve
To drown the past in darkness. So shall you
Find peace, and I, perchance, by your goodwill,
Some trifle of advancement.

BELTRAN. So you think,
Oh, well-matched pair, to find in me a third
Accomplice! Hired assassin, you mistake!
Murderer and would-be ravisher, you have earned—
Twice over earned—the death that now awaits you.
The truce is ended! (*Snatching up his sword.*)
Draw your sword and dagger!

Despite my crippled blade, your shirt of mail,
I will kill you! Or, if no God dwells in heaven,
And you kill me, you do but end a life
Ruined beyond repair. On guard! (*He draws his dagger.*)

DE FLORES. Hold, hold,
A moment! You make show of chivalry,
Señor, yet take me at a disadvantage
Despite my shirt of steel. You are two to one.
Behold the fury in this woman's eyes!
She will assail me traitorously—I know her,
And know her reckless. Man to man, I am for you:
But man and wild-cat!—I decline the odds.

BELTRAN. Woman, stand back and hold aloof! One movement
To tamper with the fray, and by this sword!
That movement is your last.

BEATRIZ *crouches, up* L., *watching intently.* BELTRAN *attacks* DE FLORES. *After they have exchanged several passes, he strikes the sword out of* DE FLORES' *hand, parries* DE FLORES' *dagger with his own, and, closing with him, stabs him in the neck, above the coat of mail.* DE FLORES *falls, dying.*

DE FLORES. So! I am sped!
You have foiled me, mistress, of my crowning vengeance.
I leave you to your—happiness. (*Dies.*)

BELTRAN *throws down his dagger upon the table, and sheathes his sword, looking down at* DE FLORES. BEATRIZ, *hovering cautiously, with the gait of a wild animal, gradually approaches the body.*

BEATRIZ. Is he dead?

BELTRAN. His lips are sealed. Here, in this nether sphere,
He can no more accuse you. When you meet
Before the Almighty Judge, what witness, think you,
Will he then bear?

BEATRIZ. The fiend! The treacherous demon!
The grinning werewolf, with his venomous fangs!
Oh, I could——! (*Snatches the dagger from the table, and makes as though to stab the dead body.*)

BELTRAN (*seizing her arm*). Hold! Are you in very deed
A vampire, famishing for dead men's blood?
(*She drops the dagger.*)
This and the other—two men have you slain
Already; and my prescient spirit tells me
You soon may add a third to your account.
I know not what faint scruple holds my hand
Now, even now, from burying yonder blade
Deep in my tortured breast.

BEATRIZ. You, my Beltrán!
Oh, cruel! Put away such brainsick thoughts!
If I have sinned, it was for you, for you!
And you can dream of ending at a blow
Your life and mine—for 'tis in you I live!
Oh, you have spoken wildly in your frenzy,
Wildly and cruelly to your Beatriz.
You knew not what you said. Your Beatriz
Forgives and loves you—loves the strength and valour
That shielded her, and smote to deepest hell
Her mortal foe. But now, shake off, shake off
These hateful fantasies! be yourself again!
This carrion holds no threat for us—you slew him
In act of offering barbarous violence
To me, your wife. You did as the law and honour
Alike decree—what is there, then, to fear?
To-morrow's dawn will show a sky serene—
The past is dead—the future lies before us,
Sunlit and lovelit! Let us go to meet it,
My lover and my lord!

BELTRAN. To what a thing,
To what a soulless idol, God in heaven!
Have I bent down in worship? Is't then true
That spirits of the damned, loosed from their chains,

Can enter and enslave the loveliest forms?
Malignant woman, dare you speak of love
To me? Oh God! It was but seven nights since
You gave me your angelic loveliness,
Hallowed—dost hear the mockery in the word?
Hallowed in holy wedlock. I, poor fool,
Felt all my glowing passion infused
With reverence, and worshipped God in you,
The crown of his creation. And behold!
When to our marriage-bed your feet went up—
Your delicate feet of rose-flushed alabaster—
They trod upon a corse, a festering corse,
Slain by your cunning! Trod, not shrinkingly,
Not shudderingly, but rather trampled it
With goulish exultation, glorying
To have offered on the altar of your—love—
This sacrifice. While on my breast you lay,
Deep in your heart the hideous knowledge lurked,
As loathsome as the mouldering thing entombed
Under our very casement. Wretched woman!
Know you, ev'n now, no prickings of remorse?
Have you no entrails of compassion?

BEATRIZ. You,
Yes, you are heartless, you are cruel, you
Who make my love a crime! Why should I pity
This pitiless wretch, or yonder blustering coxcomb?
Beltrán, my own Beltrán, you who but now,
Despite his shirt of steel, faced this black traitor,
And slew him, must I think you none the less,
A coward? Why let phantom fears intrude
Between us and our happiness? Can you make
My passionate, my undaunted love for you
A crime and a reproach? I saw in you
The man of men for whom my womanhood
Came into being; and, since *you* would not,
I took the straight, the inevitable path
To the fulfilment of our destiny.
That was my crime—and you, you, you denounce it!

See, at your feet I kneel, your wife, your mate,
In soul and body yours, and conjure you
By all the blissful memories of our love,
By all our hopes of happy, happy years
To come, while youth, and strength and beauty still
Are ours, and in our passionate, pulsing veins
The life-blood courses——

BELTRAN, *at the beginning of this speech, has put on a cloak which had lain on a chair,* R. BEATRIZ, *kneeling at the point indicated, seizes and clings to this cloak. He now snatches it from her grasp.*

BELTRAN. Life-blood! Dare you speak
Of life-blood, while the death-blood from your hands
Is dripping?
(*Leaning over her with a sort of tenderness*)
Oh, my love! If there were aught
In heaven or earth, elixir, lymph or balm,
Could wash those hands clean, I would give my life for it.
But no! It cannot be! The paradise
Your beauty made for me, your crime has ruined.
Its gore-bedabbled joys would sear my soul—
No joys, but torments. I must turn my back
On Eden, and go forth into the desert
Of life without you. This man's mouth being dumb,
Your secret now is safe: you have no revealment
To fear from me. Adieu!

BEATRIZ (*springing to her feet*). You are leaving me
To-night? Alone, with this?

BELTRAN. What's that to you?
A dead man more or less!

BEATRIZ. And whither go you?

BELTRAN. I know not—care not. Let my horse decide!

BEATRIZ. And when return?

BELTRAN. When Manuel returns
To life.

BEATRIZ. You have for ever ceased to love me?

BELTRAN. Love you or hate you—can I tell? My heart
Feels nothing—it is numb with agony.

BEATRIZ. But you are still my husband! I am still
Your wife! Has Holy Church not made us one
For ever?

BELTRAN. What the Church has joined, your crime
Has sundered.

BEATRIZ. You will never——?

BELTRAN. Nevermore
Cross what a little week ago I deemed
The verge of heaven—the threshold of your chamber.

BEATRIZ. You sentence me to endless widowhood,—
To living death!

BELTRAN. Farewell—a last farewell,
Beatriz Juana! [*Exit*, R.

BEATRIZ. Gone! Was ever woman
So outraged, so humiliated! And I—
I crawled before him! Truly, he said well,
(*Pointing to* DE FLORES.)
Who said that love and hate went ever paired,
Two edges of one blade! My virtuous lord.
Oh, you shall pay for this!
(*She kneels beside the body of* DE FLORES, *feels in his breast, and produces the letter. Then she takes it to the candle on the table,* R., *lights it at the flame, and, as she watches it burn, says:*)
My good Beltrán
De Cabra, you shall dearly pay for this!
(*She goes to the door, centre, draws back the curtains, and, as she is on the point of entering, sinks on her knees, and bursts into a passion of tears, saying:*)
The threshold of my chamber. . . .

The Curtain falls.

ACT FOURTH

The hall, as in the two preceding Acts. Morning light.

BEATRIZ *is seated on the couch, idly touching her guitar. After a few moments, she drops the guitar, and claps her hands twice.*

BEATRIZ. Camilla! Ho, Camilla.

CAMILLA (*from door, centre*). Here, my lady.

BEATRIZ. Where is my father?

CAMILLA. In his cabinet,
With Don Gedeón.

BEATRIZ. No news yet of Ottavio?

CAMILLA. None that I hear of.

BEATRIZ. Oh, he is a laggard!
'Tis but a three days' ride, and this the ninth
Since he set forth—is't not?

CAMILLA. You keep the count
Better than I do, for you know his errand—
From me 'tis hidden.

BEATRIZ. You are curious,
Camilla?

CAMILLA. Where my lady is concerned,
Should I be unconcerned?

BEATRIZ. Well, well,—be patient.
Contain yourself for yet an hour or two—
At most a day—and then the mystery
Shall be unveiled, and you will understand
The expectancy that tortures me. This day
Is big with fate for me. My future hangs

Upon an hour's decision. (*Pause.*) Don Gedeón
Lingers. 'Tis his daily wont at noon
To kiss my hand.

CAMILLA. I think it lacks a little
Of noon. And in the corridor I hear
Footsteps.

DON HIPPOLITO *enters,* R., *followed by* DON GEDEON.
CAMILLA *goes out, centre.*

HIPPOLITO. Are you astir, my Beatriz?
Can you receive the obeisance of our guest?

BEATRIZ (*rising*). Right willingly, my father. Give me first
Your blessing. (*She offers him her brow to kiss.*)

HIPPOLITO (*kissing her*). Dearest daughter mine!

GEDEON. Good morrow, gentle lady. (*He kisses her hand.*)
If your looks
Belie you not, your dreams were pleasant.

BEATRIZ. Nay,
This messenger's delay disquiets me.

HIPPOLITO. The roads are difficult. His best of speed
Could scarcely bring him earlier back.

BEATRIZ. I fear
His errand may be fruitless.

GEDEON. Don Beltrán
Could not refuse my challenge, if a spark
Of manhood lingers in him!

BEATRIZ. But Ottavio
May not have found him at his Murcian tower.

HIPPOLITO. What other refuge should the recreant seek?
And those I spoke with solemnly averred
They had seen him there, the prey of deep dejection,
Leading a hermit life.

GEDEON. Doubt not that justice
Will one day overtake him.

BEATRIZ. "One day"—yes—
But meantime——

HIPPOLITO. If you would but tell us, daughter,
All that upon the fatal night befell,
And how De Flores met his end——

BEATRIZ (*affecting to shudder*). Nay, nay—
Beltrán is still my husband, howsoever
Unworthily—or worse—he may have won me.
Until his guilt be proved, I dare not tell,
Even to you, the story of that night.
So pardon me, my father.

GEDEON. Gracious lady,
Though it may lend my brother's murderers
A respite, yet I cannot but revere
Your nobleness of soul.

BEATRIZ. Nay, Don Gedeón,
You praise me groundlessly. While still a wife,
You would not have me false to wifely duty?

HIPPOLITO. Curst be the day that gave you such a husband.
My mind misgave me, but your headstrong haste
O'erbore my scruples.

BEATRIZ. I was blind, my father,
I loved him blindly.

Enter PABLO, R.

PABLO (*to* HIPPOLITO). The Corregidor
Attends you in your cabinet, my lord.

HIPPOLITO. Good! I come straightway——

BEATRIZ. The Corregidor!

HIPPOLITO. Nay, start not, Beatriz—Don Roderigo,
You know, is my good friend. I deemed it prudent
To give him timely warning to be ready
In case the mystery of Manuel's end
Should suddenly be solved.

BEATRIZ. Doubtless, dear father,
You acted wisely.

HIPPOLITO. I will go to him. [*Exit*, R.

GEDEON. You are restless, lady.

BEATRIZ (*sitting on the couch*). Oh, the weary hours
Of lingering suspense!

GEDEON. Think you to me
The hours seem shorter. Fear and tremulous hope
Fight, in my breast, a duel to the death.

BEATRIZ. What fear you?

GEDEON. Can you ask? The brightest vision
That ever hung before the ravished eyes
Of mortal man, may at a breath dissolve
And leave me broken-hearted.

BEATRIZ. If Beltrán,
You mean, should show himself misjudged, and prove
Guiltless of screening Manuel's murderers,
There then would be no duel——

GEDEON. And no way—
No honourable way—to break the bond,
Dear saint, that ties you to a pitiful cur,
A moonstruck recreant who insults your virtue
And beauty by deserting you——

BEATRIZ. Stay, stay!
I must not listen! I am still his wife;
And if the sudden frenzy that o'ercame him
So strangely, should as suddenly depart
And leave him in his sober senses—then
It were my wifely duty to forgive him,
And strive to reawake, as from a swoon,
My love for him.

GEDEON. 'Tis that, 'tis that I dread!
Your heavenly goodness, loveliest of women,
Will draw you on to sacrifice yourself
To this poor madman, if not criminal.

BEATRIZ. I loved him once.

GEDEON. Your great and generous heart
Transfigured him, and what you truly loved
Was not the man, but what you dreamed of him.
Then you were but a girl—now, Beatriz,
You are a queenly woman. Pain and sorrow
Proudly encountered, resolutely vanquished,
Have, in a few short months, ensainted you,
And given you sovereign right to more than love—
To worship!

BEATRIZ. Ah, Gedeón, the difference!
Was Manuel indeed your brother? Why
Were you the younger, he the elder born?
It almost makes one doubt of Providence.

GEDEON. Had I been elder born, dear saint, perchance
His arrogance, his vices, had been mine.
No sycophants beset, no temptresses
Allure, a younger son.

BEATRIZ. Had it been you
That from Mallorca came, a year ago,
To woo me——

GEDEON. Oh, say on, sweet Beatriz—
Could you have loved me?

BEATRIZ. This at least I'll say—
Much error, much affliction, had been spared us.

GEDEON. Error! You own, then, that your love for him,
This base De Cabra, was an error?

BEATRIZ. Nay,
I said not so. A woman's heart is loyal——

GEDEON. Ev'n to its errors, you would say?

BEATRIZ. It shrinks
With desperate reluctance from avowing
That one to whom its love has once been given
Is utterly unworthy.

GEDEON. Oh, my queen!
The very nobleness for which I love you

Is like to sound the death-knell of my hopes.
But, oh, the pity! Could you but have loved me,
No woman's love had e'er been so repaid.
Our fathers' hopes, thwarted by Manuel's fate,
Had been fulfilled in me. Our house had risen
To wealth and greatness beyond rivalry
In Spain; and you had stood pre-eminent
In station, as in beauty. Say, my queen,
Is not the vision dazzling?

BEATRIZ (*intently reflecting*). All the more
Since you, Gedeón, could wear illustriously
Such honours as, if Manuel had attained them,
Would but have made of him a laughing-stock,
A dwarf in giant's trappings. One could almost
Believe that Providence, in Manuel's death,
Did but amend the fault it had committed
In placing him before you in the world.

GEDEON. The purposes of God are hard to fathom.

BEATRIZ. True, true—I did but dally with a thought
That drifted through my mind.

DON HIPPOLITO *enters*, R., *followed by* OTTAVIO *in riding dress.*

HIPPOLITO. Ottavio's here,
My Beatriz, and reports that Don Beltrán
Rides close upon his tracks.

BEATRIZ (*springing up*). At last! At last!

GEDEON. How found you him, Ottavio? What said he
In answer to your embassage?

OTTAVIO. I found him,
In his hill-castle, sunk in apathy
And black disconsolateness. His servants said
He would not eat, he could not sleep; they feared
That in some frenzy he might take his life.
They scarce persuaded him to hear my errand;
But when, at last admitted, I threw down
Your gauntlet, telling him 'twas thought he knew

More than was fitting of Don Manuel's fate,
And bidding him, if he would clear his honour,
Face you in single combat, he arose,
Not eagerly, not fiercely, but as one
Who hears with calm resolve a fatal summons,
And said: "So be it! I will follow you."
Sometimes together, sometimes miles apart,
We made the journey, but no other word
He uttered by the way. At length we reached
The western suburb, and I spurred ahead
To herald his arrival.

BELTRAN, *in sombre travelling dress, has thrown open the door,* R., *and, hearing the last words, strides in.*

BELTRAN. He is here.
(*Pause.*)
What would you with him?

GEDEON. Sir, my messenger
Has told you——

HIPPOLITO. First, let *me* speak. Don Beltrán
De Cabra, can you look upon this lady,
My daughter, and your deeply-injured wife,
And ask: What would we with you? First, I claim
Stern retribution for the base affront,
The unendurable indignity
You have done to her, to me, to all our house.
What more you have to answer for, I know not—
(*Throws down his glove.*)
I claim priority.

GEDEON. And I, Señor,
Give you to know that general report,
Obscure, but ever growing, charges you
With guilty knowledge of my brother's fate.
'Tis known that on the day he last was seen,
You—'neath the eyes of Don Hippolito,
And of this lady, since your wife—exchanged
Hot words with Manuel, and were scarce restrained

From drawing sword on him. 'Tis manifest
You were his rival for this lady's hand.
Presumptions these, not proofs—can you rebut them?
(*Silence.*)
If not, I summon you, either to avow
Complicity, or, sword to sword with me,
Call God to judge between us—if you dare!
Pause.

BELTRAN. What says my lady wife?

BEATRIZ. Dear father, hear me!
Have patience, Don Gedeón! He is my husband—
I must have speech with him alone. It may be
That he to my affection will disclose
What violence would never wring from him.
Be not o'er-hasty, father, to essay
The dire arbitrament of blood. Remember,
Whate'er his errors, he is still the man
To whom I pledged my maiden vows. Oh, leave me
Alone with him. To summon you again
I'll strike upon the bell.

HIPPOLITO. Come, Don Gedeón;
The girl will have her will.

GEDEON. Must this be so,
Much-injured lady? Must you stoop to plead
With one who cast away contemptuously
The treasure that was his?

BEATRIZ. It must be so!

[*Exeunt*, R., HIPPOLITO, GEDEON *and* OTTAVIO.

BELTRAN. What have we two to say, oh lady fair,
Who "pledged to me her maiden vows"?

BEATRIZ. Beltrán,
Call back your reason! Be a man again,
And all may yet be well.

BELTRAN. To be a man
I must conceal and profit by your crime.

Conceal it—yes: I am not your justiciar—
But profit by it—no!

BEATRIZ. You are still resolved
That one swift, passion-prompted deed, that crushed
A crawling thing, and swept it from our path,
Shall make my life a long-drawn penitence?
'Tis madness! Rouse yourself! Blot out the past!
Let each forgive the other.

BELTRAN. You, sweet lady!
Can *you* forgive? Oh, miracle of grace!
And will you, then, recall the calumnies,
The crafty hints, the treacherous silences,
That have laid guilty knowledge to my charge,
If not the very deed?

BEATRIZ. I gave no hint,
I spoke no calumnies. Your flight itself
Engendered the suspicions. Your return
Will crush them.

BELTRAN. My return will make me seem,
Not criminal, but merely lunatic,
And now restored to reason? That's the hope
Your grace holds out to me?

BEATRIZ. If you are indeed
Restored to reason.

BELTRAN. To complete my cure
'Twere well that you should dissipate the mists
That still bedim my mind. Of Manuel's fate
How much is known?

BEATRIZ. No more than when you fled.

BELTRAN. The secret of the well is undisclosed?

BEATRIZ. Who should disclose it?

BELTRAN. Having lured De Flores
To death——

BEATRIZ. *I* lure him. It was he himself
Who dug the pitfall!

BELTRAN. Well, we'll let that pass.
De Flores dead, why not have told the truth—
The half-truth, and the lesser half, but still
Something not quite a lie—and say he had slain
Don Manuel?

BEATRIZ. Why, how should I have learnt it?
And how explain the unproportioned deed—
Death for a peevish word? And then my dagger——

BELTRAN. Your indiscreet stiletto would have pointed
Straight to the truth—'twas well bethought. Your genius
For crime has ripened into mastery.
You were a tyro when you penned that letter,
Those luckless words that, like a lightning-flash,
Revealed to me the caverns of your soul,
Hideous with crawling things.

BEATRIZ. Beware, Beltrán!
Let not your frenzy quite outrun my patience;
Or else——

BELTRAN. That letter? Doubtless you remembered——

BEATRIZ. To burn it? Find its ashes if you can!

BELTRAN. And then De Flores' death? What was the story
You told of that?

BEATRIZ. The truth—that he attempted
My honour, and you slew him.

BELTRAN. Then—my flight?
You said I was o'erta'en by sudden madness?

BEATRIZ. I said that madly you suspected me
Of willingly admitting to my chamber
The wretch you had slain.

BELTRAN. Oh, innocence belied!
How cunningly you weave, with warp and woof
Of truth and falsity, a cloak of darkness
To hide your infamies——

BEATRIZ. Enough, enough!
With venomous words, as to a thing abhorred,
You blight my last fond hope of reconcilement.
I loved you once, and still a spark unquenched
Glows in my heart. But if you scoff at me
Adieu to love!—It must be war between us!

BELTRAN. War? Is not war declared? Your father's glove
Lies there. Your lover's challenge——

BEATRIZ. Lover's! Dare you
Defame my honour!

BELTRAN. Heaven forbid! Your honour
Goes hand in hand with policy. When once
Your honourable suitor, Don Gedeón,
Has run your brainsick husband through the body
(The trick's familiar to your politic thought)
He brings you all that Manuel offered you
Without the trifling incommodity
Of Manuel's fatuous person. 'Tis a scheme
Worthy your genius. Just a clash of swords,
And presto! your great error is undone,
That rash, impulsive weakness of the flesh
That made you for a moment mine. But, lady,
Though honourable death were welcome to me,
You shall not lead me lamb-like to the slaughter!
I will not passively give up the ghost
To help your stratagems. Your father's challenge
I will postpone. I will refuse to meet him
Till I have finished with Gedeón! You know
My sword is not a plaything—and, by God!
It shall go hard but I will finish with him
In very deed!

BEATRIZ. Poor fool, you have seal'd your fate!
Still haunted by my passionate memories,
For you I madly strove to put aside
Visions of wealth and power and adoration
A queen might envy. I would have renounced them,
For one kind word from you! That folly's past:

You, *you* have killed it—you, Beltrán de Cabra!
Because I loved you, and because I seized
Life and its joys too eagerly and boldly,
You impiously usurp the judgment-seat,
And doom me, in the flush and glory of youth,
To cloistered penitence for evermore.
It shall not be! God's not so pitiless
As you! And now, forsooth, you seek to slay
A man whose only sin is worshipping me—
It shall not, shall not be! Woe to the man
Who first humiliates, and then goads a woman
To desperation! Will she pick and choose
Her weapons, think you? No—in self-defence
She'll shrink from nothing.

BELTRAN. Doubtless—if her name
Be Beatriz Juana de Urgel.

BEATRIZ. That jibe shall be your last!
(*She rushes at the bell and strikes it.*)
A tinkling thing,
And yet it rang your knell, Beltrán de Cabra!
(DON HIPPOLITO *and* DON GEDEON *enter*, R.)
Come, father! Don Gedeón! Summon the household!
Let all the world hear! Oh, 'tis horrible!
Oh, horrible!

HIPPOLITO. What has affrighted you,
My daughter?

GEDEON. Fear not, Lady Beatriz—
We are here!

BEATRIZ. That man! Oh, let him not escape you!
You said that the Corregidor was here—
Oh, summon him!
OTTAVIO, CAMILLA *and servants have come crowding in.* HIPPOLITO *whispers to* PABLO, *who goes off*, R.

GEDEON. What direful tidings, lady,
Have moved you thus?

BEATRIZ. I partly had divined it;
I battled with the thought; I strove to strangle it,
And cleanse my mind. But now—oh, heavens!—the worst
That e'er my fevered fancy, as I thought it,
Had conjured up, proves to be less unhallowed,
Less hideous than the truth. Oh God! Oh God!
Why do I live to tell it?

The CORREGIDOR, *a stately magistrate, enters,* R., *followed by a* SECRETARY *and six or eight alguazils, armed with partisans.*

HIPPOLITO (*to the* CORREGIDOR). Sir, my daughter
Entreats your presence. She has some impartment,
It seems, that she desires to make to you.

CORREGIDOR. An accusation, lady?

BEATRIZ. Yes.

CORREGIDOR. 'Twere well
We should receive it formally. Escribano,
Arrange the court.

(*The* SECRETARY *whispers to the servants. They quickly bring forward the table to the centre, place a high chair behind it for the* CORREGIDOR, *and a seat for the* SECRETARY *at the end,* R. *At a motion from the* CORREGIDOR, DON HIPPOLITO *takes a seat on his right, a little way back from the table.*)
Are you the accuser, lady?

(*She bows her head.*)
And who the accused? Is he here present?

BEATRIZ (*pointing to* BELTRAN). There!
There stands the man.

CORREGIDOR. Let him be guarded.

BELTRAN. Needless—
I have no will to fly.

Nevertheless two alguazils place themselves behind him.

CORREGIDOR (*to* BEATRIZ). Your accusation
Concerns——?

BEATRIZ. The death of Manuel de Merlo,
Once my betrothed.

CORREGIDOR. Say on; and, Escribano,
Write down her words.

BEATRIZ. First, sir—and you, my father,
Be not dismayed if hidden crime should rear
Its grisly head within your very gates—
First, sir, let men be sent to search the well,
The disused, ruined well——

HIPPOLITO. Here in our garden?

BEATRIZ. Aye, here—where else, my father? Let them search
And whatsoe'er they find, report it truly.

CORREGIDOR. Let it be done.
(DON HIPPOLITO *gives whispered directions to* PABLO. *He and some other servants, with two alguazils, go out to the right.*)
Now, lady, to your tale.

BEATRIZ. Have I the strength? Oh, bear with me, Señor!
My soul is rent with anguish. Bear with me,
If in unravelling the tangled skein
Of villainy, my thought should grow perplext,
And my tongue falter. Where must I begin?
Oh me, my mind's distraught!

CORREGIDOR. 'Tis scarce three months
Since, in this very room, Miguel de Flores,
Your father's steward, was found stabbed to death,
Stabbed in the throat. You said your husband slew him
In act of offering violence to your person—
Was that the truth?

BEATRIZ. The truth? Do you suspect me,
Señor, of falsehood? All I said was true;
But true it is I said not all—I could not
Tell the whole story of that dreadful night.
Yet all I clearly knew I told—the rest
Was formless fear.

CORREGIDOR. Now you must tell us all.

BEATRIZ. Hear, then: the vile De Flores first essayed,
By vague affrightments, darkling menaces,
To bend me to his purpose—vowed he held
My husband in his power, and could compel him
Ignobly to assent to any shame.
"We are leagued," he said, "in mischief. Each of us
Holds a stiletto at the other's throat.
Our guilt unites us. He can ask of me
All that I have, and I must give it him
On peril of my neck. But my demands
Are no less law to him; and"—said the slave—
"My first demand is you, his wife."

HIPPOLITO. Great God!
The man I trusted!

CORREGIDOR. Pray you, peace, my Lord!

BEATRIZ. Just as he hissed these words into my ear,
And laid on me his loathsome hands, my husband
Entered and saw. He rushed with naked blade
Upon the ravisher, and, I well believe,
Would fain have stopped his tongue, this side of doomsday,
With one swift thrust; but, as you know, Señor,
De Flores wore a shirt of steel, and forced him
To parley.

CORREGIDOR. And you heard their parley?

BEATRIZ. No—
On plea of sparing me distress, *he* forced me
Back to my chamber, and he locked the door.
I heard their voices loud in altercation—
I heard Don Manuel's name—I heard De Flores
Befoul my honour, and declare me wanton,
Pretending I had made a tryst with him
That night. Thereat I beat upon the door,
And shrieked denial of the infamy—
When suddenly I heard the clash of swords,

A scuffle, and a fall—a heavy groan—
Then silence. Frozen with fear, I held my breath,
And listened—listened! Which of them had fallen?
Which, when the door was opened, should I see
Upon the threshold? Hark! the key at last!
Turned in the lock—and there my husband stood!
I flew to him, my knight, my paladin,
With thanks to God and him for my deliverance—
But oh, the horror!—from my clinging arms
He shrank, as from the pest. His face convulsed
With rage, he dragged me forward: "See," he cried,
"There, mistress, lies your paramour! He is dumb—
He can nor kiss nor tell!" And so he fled,
In jealous fury, forth into the night.

HIPPOLITO. My poor, poor daughter!

GEDEON. Most unhappy lady,
What have you not endured?

CORREGIDOR (*to* BELTRAN). Is this, sir, true?

BELTRAN. Let her speak on. I thought that I had sounded
All the abysses of her soul—but no!
They open, gulf on gulf.

BEATRIZ. At first, my father,
You know, it was the ruin of my love
That tortured me. But soon De Flores' words
Insinuating partnership in guilt,
And chiefly broken phrases I had caught
Of their contention, in my memory
Came floating to the surface, wreckage-like
After a tempest; an o'erwhelming fear
Fell on me that De Flores had not lied
When he accused my husband of complicity
In some dark crime; and if they were indeed
Allied in crime, what other could it be
Than Manuel's murder?

CORREGIDOR. You were sorely tried,
Lady; yet by my office I am bound

To tell you, 'twas your duty to make known
To justice your suspicions.

BEATRIZ. Are you human,
Yet can reproach a wife for keeping locked
In her own heart suspicions of her husband?
But, when his flight, despite my silence, bred
Surmises in the general mind of men,
My one great longing was to call him back,
And bid him clear his honour, and dispel
The doubts that tortured me. I blush to say it,
But in my heart, my fond, forgiving heart,
There lurked a piteous hope of reconcilement,
If he could prove himself maligned. He came!
Constrained by Don Gedeón de Merlo's challenge,
He came. Oh God, that I had died before
I had seen his face and looked into his soul!
This man that once I loved, this man, my husband,
Came—must I say it?—oh!

She is apparently on the point of fainting. CAMILLA, *who has been standing close behind her, rushes forward to support her.* BEATRIZ *clings to her, and buries her face in her breast.*

CAMILLA. My dear, dear lady!
Rest on my heart!

HIPPOLITO. Call up your courage, daughter!
A malediction rests upon this house
Till all be brought to light. You have nought to fear,—
Tell the whole truth, how black soe'er it be.

GEDEON. I am your champion, lady, to the death—
Remember that!

BEATRIZ (*recovering herself*). Beltrán de Cabra met me,
His wife, with mingled menace and entreaty.
If I, to shield him, would but perjure me,
And say De Flores, ere he died, confessed
Himself Don Manuel's murderer, and none other,
My gracious lord perchance might pardon me.

But if I should betray him—so he said—
And breathe one word betokening his guilt,
He'd turn the tables on me, and denounce
Me—*me*—as the contriver of the deed,
And partner in its black accomplishment.

HIPPOLITO. Is't possible!

GEDEON. Oh, monstrous villainy!

BELTRAN. Say on, sweet lady! I drink in your words,
And yearn to hear the sequel. Keep me not
Stretched on the rack.

BEATRIZ. Then, then, I learned the truth,
The hideous truth. Beltrán had played upon
De Flores' hate for Manuel, knowing not
His deadlier hate for me. De Flores hoped
To have us at his mercy, both of us—
And to that end he from my chamber stole
A little jewelled knife, my father's gift,
Wherewith to do the deed. And now, Señor,
You see the villainy De Flores planned,
And this man has inherited from him!
That dagger, in Don Manuel's bosom buried,
Gives, as he thinks, my neck to the garrote.
And so it may if *his* word weighs with you—
His against mine! Señor Corregidor,
My father, Don Gedeón, *who* speaks the truth?—
This cowering renegade, this tortured soul,
Or Beatriz Juana de Urgel?

(*She totters, as if about to fall.* DON GEDEON *rushes forward to support her, but she flings herself on her knees before* DON HIPPOLITO.)

My father! Oh, my father! All my strength
Is gone; this cruel world has martyr'd me.
Oh, in a cloister let me hide myself
And rest my weary spirit.

OTTAVIO, *carrying a sword,* PABLO, *the two alguazils and one or two servants, enter hastily,* R.

GEDEON (*advancing*). Speak, Ottavio!
What have you found?

CORREGIDOR. Speak, sir!

OTTAVIO. My lord Gedeón,
Know you this sword?

GEDEON. I know it. 'Twas my brother's.

OTTAVIO. We found it in the ruined well; and by it
A body, in the garments that he wore,
I well remember, on the fatal day
When last I saw him.

GEDEON. My unhappy brother!
(*Turning on* BELTRAN)
Oh, villain! Think not I'll cross swords with you!
'Twere too much honour! In the public square
I see your scaffold rising.

CORREGIDOR. Found you aught
To show how Manuel de Merlo died?

OTTAVIO. Piercing his doublet in the breast, we found
This dagger.
Takes it from an alguazil, and holds it up.

BEATRIZ (*still on her knees, beside her father*).
'Tis my dagger. Speak, Camilla—
You know it.

CAMILLA. Yes, my lady, it is yours.
The dagger is passed to the CORREGIDOR.

BEATRIZ. Oh, little did you think that glittering toy
Would slay your daughter's happiness, my father,
Or would be used by villainy to menace
Her honour and her life.

CORREGIDOR (*to alguazils, indicating* BELTRAN).
Disarm that man
And seize him.
(*They do so. His sword and dagger, being on one baldrick, come off together.*)

Have you aught, Beltrán de Cabra,
To say, before the prison closes on you?
If so, say on.

BELTRAN. I beg of you, Señor,
Your licence to examine that same toy,
That dagger.

(*The* CORREGIDOR *hands it to an alguazil, who passes it to* BELTRAN.)

Yes, I have seen it oft, my lady,
Hang from your girdle. 'Tis of tempered steel—
Fit emblem of your soul, as keen, as cruel,
As deadly. To the eye a thing of beauty,
It speaks of treachery to the inward sense.
Of lurking, crawling death.
(*To the* CORREGIDOR) Sir, as for you,
You and the law, there's much that I could say,
If life for me held aught worth fighting for.
Time was—it seems a million years ago—
I thought the world a brave abiding-place,
Of Justice, Honour, Beauty, Faith and Love!
From that fair world I would with all my might
Have striven to expel a noxious thing,
A venom-breathing canker, that had crept,
Masked as a beauteous flower, into its precincts.
But lo! That world was but a thing of dreams,
A cloud-built palace of the sunset—now
A desolation and a bitter jest
To my awakened sense. I dreamed—I woke—
I now would sleep again, a dreamless sleep—
And thus I seek it——!

Stabs himself with the dagger.

CORREGIDOR. Hold his hand!

BELTRAN. Farewell,
Sweet Beatriz Juana de—— (*Falls dead.*)

GEDEON (*who has rushed up to him*). Too late!
The villain has escaped us.

HIPPOLITO. Better so!
Would Heaven we ne'er had seen him.

GEDEON. Manuel,
My brother, rest in peace! You are well avenged.
The murderer's ravings——

BEATRIZ (*who has crossed over and knelt beside* BELTRAN'S *body*). Do not speak of them!
Forget them, friend, as I do. He was once
Most dear to me, and, black as were his sins,
Some touch of nobleness was blent with them.

GEDEON. Dear saint, you are all forgiveness.

BEATRIZ. Father, hear me!
I am his widow, and I claim for him
An honourable grave. Then to a convent
Let me retire, and heal my bruised spirit.

HIPPOLITO. Daughter, so be it.

GEDEON. To a convent, lady?
But not for ever! (*Pause.*) Speak!

BEATRIZ (*low in his ear*). For ever? No.

The Curtain falls.

LIDIA

COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

Suggested by Massinger's
"Great Duke of Florence"

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

The Duke of Taranto—(42).
The Marchesa Ariadne, *his sister*—(45).
Dafne, *her daughter*—(25).
Giovanni, *the Duke's nephew*—(20).
The Count of Pantellaria, *the Duke's chamberlain*—(35).
Count Carlo Caromonte—(55).
Lidia, *his daughter*—(19).
Petronella, *her maid.*
Pandolfo, *Caromonte's steward*—(40).
Giulio, *the Duke's personal attendant*—(30).
Other Servants.

The first Act passes at Caromonte, eight leagues from Taranto; the remaining Acts in the Palace at Taranto.

Two days elapse between Acts I and II, one night between Acts II and III, and one night between Acts III and IV.

ACT I

In the gardens of the Villa Caromonte, about eight leagues from Taranto. An expanse of sward, partly overshadowed by trees. In the centre a semicircular marble seat with a back to it, of spacious and beautiful design, around a sundial placed at the centre of the arc. Right and left, in front of the enclosing shrubberies, moss-grown terminal statues. At the back there is a grassy terrace,[1] *some three feet high, and above it the background is closed in by three screens of yew hedge, one screen projecting from each side, about one-third of the width of the scene, while the space between them is blocked, as it were, by the third screen, placed some four feet in front of the other two, and overlapping them at each end. Against the middle of this hedge, a statue of Diana. Clipped obelisks and urns break the flat line of the hedge-tops. Blue sky beyond.*

These hedge-screens form the backing of the stage of an (invisible) alfresco theatre, lying beyond them. From the moment the curtain rises, the sounds of some sort of performance going on in this theatre can be vaguely heard—the sing-song of recitation, snatches of music, an occasional burst of applause.

The Count of Pantellaria *enters, down* R., *and looks about him, evidently unfamiliar with the place, and attracted by the sounds proceeding from behind the hedge. He is a self-consciously handsome man of thirty-five, foppish in his exterior, so far as his military dress (light breastplate, etc.) will permit. He moves across, in front of the sundial, and is approaching the background when there is a burst of laughter from the unseen audience, and an* Old Man, *bent, bearded, wearing huge horn spectacles,*

[1] This elevation is not absolutely essential.

carrying a sack on his back, and supporting himself on a staff, totters out through the left-hand opening in the hedge. As he meets the COUNT, *he drops his sack and staff, and draws himself up.*

THE OLD MAN. Whom do I see? The Count of Pantellaria!

COUNT. Nay, sir—plain Captain Moro. Who are you?

THE OLD MAN. A Deadly Sin, sir—I am Avarice.

COUNT. Speak plainly, since you know me.

THE OLD MAN. Nay, not I,
Good Captain Moro.

COUNT. Let us drop our masks.
I seem to have heard your voice——

THE OLD MAN (*throwing off spectacles, beard, etc.*).
I am Pandolfo,
Late esquire to the Count of Pantellaria,
Now Caromonte's steward, at your service.

COUNT. Give me thy hand, old friend; but know me still
As Captain Moro. Are you turned a mummer?

PANDOLFO. I play the Miser in the Prince's masque.
But you, my lord, seem also to be mumming,
And not in jest. Why should His Grace's chamberlain
Deny his name? They say you are first favourite
At Court.

COUNT. They say not altogether wrongly.
The Duke reposes flattering confidence
In me. I now am on a secret mission.

PANDOLFO. To Caromonte?

COUNT. To spy out the land.

PANDOLFO. What is there here to spy on?

The COUNT *has moved down to the left end of the semicircular bench, and seated himself negligently on the back of it.*

COUNT. When the Duke,
Seven years ago, to Caromonte's tutelage
Entrusted his young nephew, Prince Giovanni,
He knew not, or at least he heeded not,
That Caromonte had a daughter, then
A child in pinafores. But lately rumour
Has spoken of her as no more a child.
Children grow up; and suddenly the Duke
Bethinks him of the possibility
That he has left his nephew and his heir
Too long secluded in this Paradise,
Unmindful of its Eve. In such an Eden
Serpents sometimes intrude.

PANDOLFO. Not here, not here!
Set the Duke's mind at rest: my Lady Lidia
And the young Prince are frank, firm friends indeed,
But nothing more.

COUNT. The whisperings of Satan—
That is, of sex—have not perturbed their innocence?
Art sure of that?

PANDOLFO. You may believe me, sir—
We servants watch our masters. Satan's voice
Has here been mute—at least has passed unheeded.

COUNT. Good, good! Yet none the less the Duke did wisely
To send me, like the Angel Gabriel,
Incognito to reconnoitre Eden,
And summon Adam back to Court.

PANDOLFO. The Prince!

COUNT. His school-days end to-day: a sound precaution:
For sometimes Satan does not whisper, but
Speaks suddenly in loud, imperious tones
Strangely compulsive. (*Sighing.*) All too well I know it,
My good Pandolfo.

PANDOLFO. We at Caromonte
Will grieve to lose the Prince—a kindly youth.

COUNT (*rising*). Prithee, Pandolfo, entertain my escort—
I left them at the Villa.

PANDOLFO. Was there no one
There to receive them?

COUNT. Neither man nor mouse.

PANDOLFO. The varlets all had slipped away to watch
This mummery.

COUNT. Which now, I think, is ending.

Sounds of the performance have occasionally been heard during the foregoing scene. There is now a loud and prolonged outburst of applause.

PANDOLFO (*going*). Your men shall be my care.

COUNT. And recollect:
I am Captain Moro.

PANDOLFO. Then you would not have me
Announce you as the Angel Gabriel?

COUNT. Villain, begone! Here come your brother mountebanks.

PANDOLFO *goes out in front,* R., *leaving behind him his bag, staff and other properties, which lie up* L. *The* COUNT *moves up towards the back,* L., *as some grotesque figures come gambolling in by the right-hand gap in the hedge at back. They look backwards as though awaiting some one that is to follow, and do not see the* COUNT. *They represent Iracundia, Crudeltà, Odio, Gelosi'a (men), Lussuria, Invidia, Accidia, Calunnia, Menzogna (women).*[1] *One of the latter is* PETRONELLA. *Presently enter* LIDIA, *in the character of Superbia, wearing a towering and fantastic head-dress, very high-heeled shoes (which must not, however, impede her grace of movement), and, in general, garish and ostentatious, though not quite unbeautiful, attire. The* MASQUERS *at once form a circle around her, take*

[1] The number of these vices may be reduced by two or three.

hands, and begin to caper and dance. GIOVANNI, *in the character of Juventus (Giovinezza) enters behind her, his costume not symbolical, though rather more elaborate than it would ordinarily be. He stands outside the dancing circle, smiling at it.*

THE MASQUERS (*chanting*).
Hail, Queen Superbia! Hail, most mighty Empress
Of all the Deadly Sins!

LIDIA (*in a high, affected voice*). Our faithful subjects,
We graciously accept this well-meant homage,
Howe'er inadequate, to our majesty.
'Tis true we have been foil'd in our assault
On Messer Giovinezza. (*Indicating* GIOVANNI.)
But what then?
Another day, with energies renewed,
We'll try again. Meanwhile, as human mortals
Let us disguise ourselves. Divinity
Weighs heavy on us.
She breaks through the circle, and runs out, back R. *The others caper after her, and* GIOVANNI *is following, when the* COUNT *slips up behind him and plucks his cloak.*

COUNT. Pray you, pardon me,
My lord—if I mistake not, I address
The Prince Giovanni?

GIOVANNI. I am he. And you?
I know you not.

COUNT. The bearer of a letter,
Your Highness, from His Grace the Duke, your uncle.
My name is Captain Moro.

GIOVANNI. Captain Moro?
I do not think I knew you at the Palace.

COUNT. After Your Highness left the Court, I joined
His Grace's bodyguard. Here, sir, is his letter.
Takes it from his pouch and hands it to the Prince.

GIOVANNI. I thank you, sir.

(*Opens the letter and reads it, with growing surprise and perturbation, the* COUNT *watching him. When he has finished, still holding the letter in his hand, he turns to the* COUNT.)

You know the letter's purport?

COUNT. I bring with me an escort, to conduct
Your Highness back to Court.

GIOVANNI. My uncle bids me
"With all speed" to take horse: yet surely not
To-day?

COUNT. His Grace, on pain of his displeasure,
Enjoined me to return this very evening.

GIOVANNI. To-day! At once! To pluck me suddenly
Up by the roots, as one plucks up a weed!
Scarce time to bid farewell!

COUNT. His Grace is ever
Abrupt in his decisions.

GIOVANNI (*thrusting the letter into his girdle*).
Tell me, Captain—
Captain—I crave your pardon——

COUNT. Captain Moro.

GIOVANNI. Pray, Captain Moro, think you this new chamberlain,
Count Pantellaria, has a hand in this?

COUNT. Affairs of state are far beyond my ken,
Your Highness. Possibly His Grace conceived
You would be eager to resume your place
At Court.

GIOVANNI. Why, so I should be—so I am,
No doubt. But here at Caromonte, I
Have been most happy, with the Count, my guardian,
And tutor.

COUNT. Princes do not always love
Their governors.

GIOVANNI. He loves me, and I him.
And then his daughter——

COUNT. Ah, he has a daughter?

LIDIA (*off* R.). Giovanni! Ho, Giovanni!

GIOVANNI (*to* COUNT). This is she.
Here, Lidia!

He advances to meet her. The COUNT *moves up.* LIDIA *enters, down* R., *in everyday dress, with a mandolin slung by a ribbon over her shoulder. She does not see the* COUNT. *Striking a few chords, she gaily chants:*

LIDIA. Tinsel, rouge and gilt, farewell!
Exit Superbia, enter Lidia!
(*She sees the* COUNT, *and is taken aback.*)
Oh!

GIOVANNI. An envoy, Lidia, from my uncle's Court.
This, Captain Moro, is the Lady Lidia,
Count Caromonte's daughter.

LIDIA *unslings the mandolin, places it on the seat, and then curtsies to the* COUNT.

COUNT (*bowing*). Lady fair,
Your humble servant.

LIDIA. You are welcome, sir.
Seek you my father?

COUNT. With the Prince's leave—
I bear a missive for Count Caromonte.

LIDIA. I'll lead you to him, sir.

GIOVANNI. Stay, Lidia, stay—
I have instant need to speak with you.

(PANDOLFO *has entered by the left-hand gap in the hedge, to gather up his properties.* GIOVANNI *sees and addresses him.*)

Ho, there!
Pandolfo—have you seen Count Caromonte?

PANDOLFO. Sir, in his study.

GIOVANNI. Thither guide this gentleman.
Pardon me, Captain Moro. I'll attend you
In half an hour.

COUNT. The Duke forbade delay.

Goes off with PANDOLFO, *back* R., *looking back at* LIDIA, *and evidently much struck with her.*

LIDIA. Forbade delay? Delay in what? Giovanni,
Your brow is clouded! Tell me, what's amiss?

GIOVANNI. Lidia, read this. (*Hands her the letter.*)

LIDIA. This? From the Duke?

GIOVANNI. Read, read!

LIDIA *sits at the end of the seat and reads,* GIOVANNI *standing beside the sundial and watching her.*

LIDIA (*reads*). "To our dear Nephew, the
Prince Giovanni, these with speed:
We have seen good, dear Nephew, for seven years, to deny ourselves the comfort of thy presence at Court, fearing temptation for thy tender age, and desiring thy perfect accomplishment in all princely arts, disciplines and virtues, at the hands of our trusted servant, the Lord of Caromonte. Howbeit, thy years are now ripe for induction into the rudiments of state-craft; and, in a sudden conjuncture, we are fain to test thy aptitudes and dispositions. Be this, then, thy warrant of release from Count Caromonte's tutelage, and do thou, taking horse with all speed, return, under Captain Moro's escort, to Court. We long to embrace thee.
Given under our own hand,
Thy Prince and loving kinsman,
AMADEO, Duke of Taranto."

LIDIA *hands the letter back to* GIOVANNI. *A long pause.*

GIOVANNI. Well, Lidia?

LIDIA. Well?

GIOVANNI. Speak! Have you naught to say?

LIDIA. When does Your Highness purpose to set forth?

GIOVANNI. Are you so heartless?

LIDIA. Would you have me swoon,
Or tear my hair? That were disloyalty.
The Duke, your uncle, calls you to the post
His bounty destines for you. Go you must;
And we, your friends, must——

GIOVANNI. "We!" Why talk of "we"?
Have *you*, you, Lidia—you my heart's one friend,
No sigh, no tear, at parting?

LIDIA. Nay, Your Highness——

GIOVANNI. My "Highness"! Do you mock me?

LIDIA. Dear Giovanni,
I but recall what both of us, mayhap,
Have all too readily forgot: your princedom,
My lowliness.

GIOVANNI. Such words are meaningless,
And well you know it, Lidia. Were I born
To rule Castile and Arragon, or to fill
The throne of all the Cæsars——

LIDIA (*interrupting*). I would be
Your loving subject, and—if you were pleased
So to remember me—your humble friend.

GIOVANNI. You wound me when you talk in such a strain.

LIDIA. No other strain would now become me, sir.

GIOVANNI. "Sir!" Must I "Madam" you? Is all forgot,—
Our hours, our years, of kind companionship:
The books we conned together—you were still
The first to thrill to Virgil's tender art,
Or solve a knotty phrase in Tacitus—
Our morning rides a-hawking, evening games
Of chess—the subtle traps you laid for me——

LIDIA (*looking up with a smile*).
You beat me—once or twice.

GIOVANNI. Yes—once or twice
You fell into the snare yourself had planned.
Say, is it all forgot? Our twilight talks
On life and death, your father sitting by,
And smiling at our youthful eagerness:
Or bursts of reckless mirth, when you gave rein,
Too rarely, to your wicked mimicry.
Were ever two such playmates? I, the boy,
Older in—months—yet owning from the first
The gentle dominance of your riper mind,
Your nobler nature——

LIDIA (*interrupting*). Stay, Giovanni, stay!
Why must you wring my heart? This blow, we knew,
Must one day fall. If tears would mend the matter,
What rivers could I shed? Trust me, the springs
Lie near—too near—the surface.

GIOVANNI. Why *too* near?
My eyes are overflowing.

LIDIA. *You* may weep.
It is your privilege to be foolish. I——
The scapegrace mimic—I must mimic wisdom,
Discretion, fortitude and all the virtues.

GIOVANNI. Unkind one! Far too well you play your part!
You do not feel as I do.

LIDIA. Be it so!
We'll say my heart is shallow, frivolous—
Does that content my lord?

GIOVANNI. You answer me
Again with mockery.

LIDIA. Giovanni, think!
Which of us twain has sorer ground for sorrow?
You go to Court—a new and splendid scene
Awaits you, and a lofty part to play.
The Duke—the letter says so—purposes
To teach you navigate the ship of state
Amid the shoals of policy. That task—

That noble task—your birthright—calls to you,
With noble pleasures beckoning in its train:
Art, music, high exploits of chivalry,
And laurels by the hands of beauty twined.

GIOVANNI. Beauty, forsooth!

LIDIA. You scorn it?

GIOVANNI Scorn it? No!
But I spell beauty L, I, D, I, A.

LIDIA (*shaking her head sadly*).
One month at Court, my friend, and you'll have learnt
Some dainty, modish new orthography.
Your future I have painted—what of mine?
The slight employments of a country girl:
Dull, daily rounds of duty: gossipings
With Petronella o'er our broidery-frames:
A game of checkers with my kind old father,
Too idle, both, for chess: to sleep: to wake,
And face the lagging hours of each new day
With never a hope of change—while everywhere
Fond memories of the—brother lost to me,
Of comradeship in studies, sports and dreams;
Gay bickerings and appeasements; sympathy
In every thought, shall haunt my solitude,
And make it doubly drear. Giovanni, say—
Whose lot is harder, yours or mine?

GIOVANNI. Why, mine!
For I must feign content, and interest
In things indifferent, since unshared by you.
But, Lidia, we are foolish, both of us,
To talk of parting in this doleful key.
I must to Court! What then? A week, a month
At most, and you shall see me here again,
Heading a gallant cavalcade——

LIDIA. You know
Our guest-room is but scanty——

GIOVANNI. Not as guests
We'll come, but as marauders, swooping down
Upon a vassal state, to bear away
The Princess, destined for a wider realm,
A larger sovereignty.

LIDIA. Awake, awake,
Giovanni, from such fever-fantasies!
Would you bring ruin on my father? Shame
On me, his daughter?

GIOVANNI. Ruin! Shame!

LIDIA. Reflect!
Shall it be said that Carlo Caromonte
Betrayed the trust his suzerain placed in him,
And, spurred by mad ambition, schemed to raise
His daughter to a ducal throne? And she,
The upstart baggage who contrived to snare
The fancy of an inexperienced boy,
What would be said of her? What punishment
Would fit her shamelessness?

GIOVANNI. You speak as though
My uncle were a tyrant! He is kind—
He will consent—your race is noble——

LIDIA. No,
Giovanni, seek not to deceive yourself.
That way lie danger and disgrace. As yet,
Our comradeship has been all beautiful,
A thing to cherish in our heart of hearts,
Most dear, most innocent, most sacred. But
Here it must end. Striving to lengthen out
Its life, we should but doom it to expire
In anguish, not in beauty. So—farewell,
Giovanni!

Holds out her hand, which he does not take.

GIOVANNI. Never, Lidia! Not farewell!
If sovereignty means slavery, I renounce it!
I'll be a free man, not a fettered Prince!

I go to Court to shake my shackles off,
Not cringe to despotism.

LIDIA. I know you better,
Giovanni! You will not be recreant—
False to your blood, ungrateful to the Duke
Who builds his hopes on you.

GIOVANNI. We'll see! We'll see!
At least, since I'm a Prince, I'll *be* a Prince!
My will shall be my law. You and your father—
I'll so contrive it, shall be called to Court—
You shall not 'scape me——

LIDIA. Fie, Giovanni, fie!
To prove your princedom, would you play the tyrant?
Let sorrow make of us a man and woman,
Not naughty children.

GIOVANNI (*falls on his knees and kisses her hand*).
Oh, forgive me, Lidia;
I *will* be worthy of you, matchless girl—
Though—cruel paradox—you make it seem
That to be worthy of you means to lose you.

LIDIA. I hear a footstep! Rise, Giovanni, rise!
(*He does so.*)
Let no one guess how foolish we have been.

GIOVANNI. How foolish *I* have been.

LIDIA. I, too! I, too!
But, being a woman, I more cunningly
Can mask my folly.

CAROMONTE, *a fine-looking old man, enters,* R., *with the* COUNT.

CAROMONTE (*advancing*). Here the children are.
So, Prince Giovanni, we must part! You quit
The school of letters for the sterner school
Of life.

GIOVANNI. The Duke decrees it, sir.

CAROMONTE. And you,
I warrant me, are nothing loth. Well, well!
You've been—Your Highness, should say, has been—
An apt and kindly pupil——

GIOVANNI. You, Sir Count,
A patient, an indulgent master. Truly
Most loth am I to leave dear Caromonte,
My boyhood's home.

CAROMONTE. Well, manhood claims you now.
The claim is something sudden—premature
I dare not call it, since the Duke commands.
But—boy, you take with you *dimidium*
Animae meae—half of this old heart.
The other half is here—
(*His arm on* LIDIA'S *shoulder.*)
but, Lidia girl,
We'll miss him, shall we not?

LIDIA. Yes, father, we
Shall miss His Highness.

COUNT (*to* GIOVANNI). Sir, the day wears on—
We have a five hours' ride——

GIOVANNI. Have with you, sir!
The time to pack a saddle-bag. My books
And other gear can follow.

CAROMONTE. I'll attend you.
(*To the* COUNT) Come, sir.

COUNT. Your pardon! May a stranger beg
A word with this fair lady?

CAROMONTE. With my daughter!

COUNT (*to* LIDIA). The masque you played in—I would fain enquire
Its scope and authorship—the Duke, my master,
Is curious in such toys.

CAROMONTE. Sir, as you will—
When all's prepared, the Prince will send for you.

COUNT. I thank you, sir.

GIOVANNI. Lidia, not yet we part?

LIDIA. Nay, I will see you in the saddle, Prince Giovanni.

GIOVANNI and CAROMONTE go off R., GIOVANNI looking back at LIDIA, who follows him with her eyes, and stands lost in thought for a moment after he has gone.

COUNT. H'm! Your Ladyship?

LIDIA (*coming to herself*). Captain Moro—
How can I serve you?

She moves over and seats herself at the opposite end of the bench from that on which she has been sitting.

COUNT. Was the masque you played
A Florentine invention?

LIDIA. Truly, no.
The Prince Giovanni writ it for a jest.

COUNT. Its name?

LIDIA. "De Juventute."

COUNT. So! The Prince
Is something of a poet?

LIDIA. More in sport
Than earnest. He aspires not to pluck off
Ariosto's laurel.

COUNT. None the less, at Court,
E'en though his verses limp, his rhymes make war
Each with the other, he will outvie Petrarch.
Doubtless this masque will be rehearsed to grace
His wedding-feast.

LIDIA. His wedding!

COUNT. Aye, his wedding—
'Twill scarce be long delayed.

LIDIA (*after a very slight pause*). No doubt, no doubt.

COUNT. The Duke, 'tis true, has been importuned oft
Himself to wed, and hand his sceptre down
In lineal succession. Well he might!
He's yet in the meridian of his age.

LIDIA. And why—why weds he not?

COUNT. A Prince's whim!
The memory of his sainted spouse, forsooth,
Forbids him, so he says—perchance believes.
But all men know he shirks the chains of wedlock,
He loves his freedom; and, 'tis thought, would fain
Silence his subjects' importunities
By giving Prince Giovanni a princess,
And pointing to a little brood of heirs
Presumptive to his dukedom.

LIDIA. He is wise.
Is any lady——? Has he made his choice?

COUNT. The destined bride, 'tis thought, is Lady Dafne,
His Grace's niece, child of his widowed sister,
Marchesa Ariadne.

LIDIA. The Princess
Whom—so men say—the Count of Pantellaria,
His minister and favourite, is to wed?

COUNT (*slightly taken aback*). Men say, my lady, many idle things
Of those above them. But it seems you have heard
Of this Count Pantellaria?

LIDIA. Who has not?
We live secluded, yet not quite cut off
From rumours of the Court.

COUNT. And what says rumour
Of Pantellaria?

LIDIA. Why should I repeat
The "idle things" that gossip whispers?

COUNT. Why?
The Count's my patron—I would fain defend him
'Gainst slander.

LIDIA. Nay, not slander—rather ridicule.
Men call him upstart—and indeed his rise
Was something sudden.

COUNT. Pooh! they are envious.

LIDIA. They add that he's a coxcomb—but withal
No fool.

COUNT. Is that the worst?
(*She nods.*) They're flatterers!
He *is* a fool! With friendship's hardihood,
I oft have told him so. Not *always*, mark you!
Were there no women in the world, the Count
Would be a paragon of sagacity.
But for a pretty face he'll play the madman;
And—let it go no further—I suspect
That at this very hour he's doing so.
I've warned him and besought him—all in vain:
He mocks at my remonstrance.

Enter PANDOLFO, R.

PANDOLFO. Captain Moro,
The escort's mounted, and the Prince awaits.

COUNT. I come, I come. Fair lady——

LIDIA. Let me be
Your guide, sir.

She moves to the right, the COUNT *following. Suddenly he clutches his forehead and appears to stagger.*

COUNT. Ha! What's this? A sudden pang!
A giddiness, a faintness, overpowers me!

PANDOLFO *runs to his aid.* LIDIA *turns in alarm.*

LIDIA. Are you unwell, sir?

COUNT (*as though bewildered*). Tell me, has there been
An earthquake-shock?

(PANDOLFO *supports him back to the seat beside the sundial.*)

My head! My brain's afire!

LIDIA. Rest here a moment—I will seek a cordial,
A sovereign remedy my mother left me.
Pandolfo will attend you.

COUNT (*apparently in agony*). Haste! Oh, haste,
I pray you!

[LIDIA *hurries off*, R.

PANDOLFO. Is the pain abated, sir?

COUNT (*having watched* LIDIA *disappear*). The pain is gone,
Pandolfo, suddenly.
But, much I fear, a second paroxysm
Awaits me, should I try to mount and ride.

PANDOLFO. My lord, you seem miraculously restored—
One might suppose you feigning.

COUNT. What you please
You may suppose: but this I know, my friend,
By hook or crook, ere I return to Court,
I must see more of yonder girl. Report
Far underpraised her matchless qualities.
My duty to the Duke were unfulfilled
If I forbore to sift her character
More deeply.

PANDOLFO. I begin to understand—
Your sudden seizure, call it apoplexy,
Sunstroke or God knows what, is sent by heaven
That you may find yourself, for certain days,
A patient in the Lady Lidia's hands,
And study her at your ease.

COUNT. Sagaciously
You gauge the situation.
(*He sees* CAROMONTE *and* GIOVANNI *approaching*, R., *and resumes his lamentations.*)
Woe is me!
The agony grows fiercer!

CAROMONTE. You are ill
My daughter tells me?

COUNT. Red-hot sword-blades stab
My brain!

GIOVANNI. Good Captain Moro, 'twere a sin
To let you ride in this distemperature.
We must delay our parting.

COUNT. No, no, no!
The Duke awaits Your Highness. His displeasure
Would fall on me (alas, my tortured brow!)
If you delayed.

CAROMONTE. But you, sir, need not ride.
The escort, lacking you, were still sufficient—
Five sturdy troopers——

COUNT. Faithful fellows all—
(Oh, my poor head)—'tis true they need no Captain——

CAROMONTE. Then rest you here till your recovery:
My house is yours——

COUNT. Your bounty overwhelms me.

CAROMONTE. My daughter has some skill in leechcraft—
(*To* LIDIA, *who arrives, followed by* PETRONELLA, *carrying a small flask and a glass on a salver.*)
Lidia,
The Captain is our guest, and in your care
Until his sickness leaves him.

LIDIA. Willingly—
The little I can do—pray, sir, drink this—
'Tis potently restorative.

COUNT. I thank you.
(*He drinks, and, while the others watch him anxiously, he seems slowly to revive.*)
Oh, magic draught! It stills my throbbing pulse.
The red-hot blades no longer pierce my brain.
But ho! this weakness——!

GIOVANNI. You must rest you here, sir.
I will excuse your tarrying to the Duke.

COUNT. I thank Your Highness.

CAROMONTE. You must seek repose—
I'll send a litter——

COUNT. With a little aid,
I think, sir, I could walk——

CAROMONTE. Well said! well said!
Come, let me help you—lend your arm, Pandolfo.
Between them, CAROMONTE *and* PANDOLFO *get the* COUNT *upon his feet.*

COUNT. Your Highness pardons me?

GIOVANNI. I trust ere long
To see you quite restored.

COUNT (*to* LIDIA, *as he moves slowly off,* R., *leaning on* CAROMONTE *and* PANDOLFO).
You have saved my life,
Fair lady.
GIOVANNI *and* LIDIA *watch them departing.*

LIDIA. Bid Pandolfo, Petronella,
Bestow the Captain in the westward chamber.

PETRONELLA. I will, my lady. [*Exit,* R.

LIDIA. Shall we follow, Prince?

GIOVANNI. No, Lidia, no! If we indeed must part,
Here let it be, from prying eyes remote.
I'm but a bungling mummer, as you know,
And have no skill to feign indifference.

LIDIA. Farewell, then, dear Giovanni! Oh, farewell,
My playmate, taskmate, brother kind and true!
Farewell, my Prince!
She holds out both hands: he takes them.

GIOVANNI. Dear Lidia, fare you well—
My playmate, taskmate—but my sister, no!
Farewell, my Princess.
Kissing her hands.

LIDIA. Hush, Giovanni! Hush!
Our boy- and girl-hood has been beautiful—
'Tis past, but 'tis not lost to us.

GIOVANNI. It is!
'Tis lost, as in the rose the bud is lost,
To-morrow flowers our man- and woman-hood!
(*He turns away.*)
Farewell, but not for long!

LIDIA (*calling after him*). Giovanni, wisdom!

GIOVANNI. Hark to the echo! It says: Lidia, hope!

Exit R. LIDIA *gazes after him, then takes up the mandolin which is still on the seat. She sits down, strikes a few chords, but lets the instrument drop, and turning, rests her arms on the back of the seat, and buries her face in them.*

Curtain.

ACT II

A gallery in the Ducal Palace at Taranto. No doors visible, R. *or* L., *but perhaps screens or hangings. The* DUKE'S *private apartments are conceived as lying to the right, the* MARCHESA'S *to the left. At the back, the gallery opens by three low arches, divided by two short, thick pillars, upon a semicircular platform, its balustrade formed by a semicircular stone seat, broken in the middle to permit of access to the platform by a staircase leading up from the garden. Through the right-hand arch a glimpse can be obtained of a long wing of the Palace, stretching backward at right angles. The garden, town and harbour are conceived as lying below to the left.*

A chandelier in the centre. Sconces, with candles, against the pillars, and on the back wall, right and left of the arches. A table, R., *with ornaments (including a silver mirror) and one or two vellum-covered books on it. A large divan,* L. *Chairs placed against the pillars. The view of the centre entrance (by the steps, back) must, so far as possible, be unobstructed. The bright light of a cloudless morning.*

PRINCE GIOVANNI *discovered sitting on the semicircular seat, a little to the left of the opening. He has tablets on his knee, in which he occasionally jots down a few words; then searches for more words, and perhaps erases some already written.*

The MARCHESA ARIADNE *and her daughter* DAFNE *enter* L. *The* MARCHESA *is a good-looking woman of forty-five, not very tall and rather stout, but by no means grotesque.* DAFNE *is a handsome girl of twenty-five, well filled-out and taller than her mother.* DAFNE *is the first to catch sight of* GIOVANNI, *who remains oblivious of their presence.*

DAFNE. The Prince Giovanni!

MARCHESA (*regarding him*). 'Tis a comely boy—
My little Dafne is in fortune's way.

DAFNE. What is his comeliness to me?

MARCHESA. Now, Dafne—
The hatefullest of vices?

DAFNE. Thrice a day
You tell me it is affectation.

MARCHESA. Right!
Wherefore affect, then, ignorance of the match
The Duke and I have planned for you?

DAFNE. Which I
Most unaffectedly abhor.

MARCHESA. Come, come!
Think you to pit a girlish whim against
Your mother's love, your uncle's power?

DAFNE. When love
Conspires with power to wed me to a boy.

MARCHESA. How twenty-five looks down on twenty!

DAFNE. And
Looks up to thirty!

MARCHESA. Are you thinking still
Upon that petty squireling!

DAFNE. Count Giannotto,
Is a brave soldier and a man of men.

MARCHESA. So may Giovanni be——

DAFNE. When I am forty!
Give me a husband who has won his spurs.

MARCHESA. You're brazen, Dafne!

DAFNE. Unaffected only.

MARCHESA. All things in moderation.

DAFNE. Even truth?

MARCHESA. Bah! I've no patience——
(*Watching* GIOVANNI.) He is scribbling verses—
Searching the vault of heaven for a rhyme.
Steal up to him! Surprise him!

DAFNE. Nay, my mother—
Such unaffected arts are not for me.

MARCHESA. How have I sinned, that heaven should afflict me
With this unwomanly, this graceless child!
(*She slips up behind* GIOVANNI *and looks over his shoulder.*)
How goes the sonnet, Prince?

GIOVANNI (*rising, and putting up his tablets in some confusion*). Madonna, pardon!
I saw you not.

MARCHESA. How goes the sonnet?

GIOVANNI. Only
A trifling canzonet.

MARCHESA. Your Cousin Dafne
Will set and sing it to her mandolin.
They come forward.

GIOVANNI (*bowing*). Good morrow, Contessina.

DAFNE (*with a low curtsy*). Prince, good morrow.

MARCHESA. Titles! 'Twixt cousins!

GIOVANNI (*taking* DAFNE'S *hand*). May I, Cousin Dafne?
(*Kissing her hand.*)

DAFNE (*frankly*). Why not, Giovanni? Cousins should be friends.

MARCHESA. So you're a poet, nephew?

GIOVANNI. Say a rhymer
In idle hours.

MARCHESA. We'll judge of that in time,
Not by your own report.

GIOVANNI. My vanity
Has been laughed out of me.

MARCHESA. Indeed? By whom?

GIOVANNI. Why, by the sternest, yet the kindest, mentor.

MARCHESA. Your tutor, Caromonte?

GIOVANNI. Partly, yes—
But chiefly by his daughter, Lidia.

MARCHESA. So!
I heard he had a daughter.

DAFNE. Is she, then,
A learned lady?

GIOVANNI. Why, it scarce needs learning
To know good verse from bad. Yet noble books
She knows and loves. All beauty speaks to her
In its own language—'tis her native tongue—
And she interprets it.

MARCHESA. To you, fair nephew?

GIOVANNI. I am her scholar.

DAFNE. Is she young?

GIOVANNI. Her years
Are less than mine.

DAFNE. And beautiful?

MARCHESA. Nay, Dafne,
That question's indiscreet. You place the Prince
In a dilemma; how to reconcile
His gallantry with his sincerity.

GIOVANNI. How mean you, Aunt? Dilemma? I see none.
My cousin's question I can answer simply.
Few ladies have I seen in my seclusion,
And truly none that can compare with Lidia.

DAFNE (*laughing*). Bravo, my Prince! A fig for gallantry!
Long live sincerity!

GIOVANNI. Ah, I see! You mean—
I should have said——. But, cousin, who compares
The freshness of the dawn with noonday's glory?

DAFNE. Better and better! You're a poet, cousin!
If she denies it, Lady Lidia's wrong.
We shall be friends, Giovanni.

Gives him her hand. He takes it, a little bewildered. She moves out on the platform to conceal her amusement. The MARCHESA *is visibly annoyed, but* GIOVANNI *remains unconscious.*

MARCHESA. Truly, Prince,
You paint a paragon.

GIOVANNI. Could you see her, Aunt,
You would not praise my painting.

MARCHESA. Have you told
The Duke of her perfections?

GIOVANNI. I have found
As yet no opportunity.

MARCHESA. I will make one—
Assuredly the Duke must hear of this.

GIOVANNI. If I dared ask——

MARCHESA. Ask? What?

GIOVANNI. You are so kind—
If 'mongst your ladies you could find a place
For Lidia——

MARCHESA (*laughing*). Ha, ha, ha!

GIOVANNI. You laugh!

MARCHESA (*serious again*). Forgive me!
I find your youth enchanting, nephew mine.
Without delay I'll ask the Duke's permission—
Be sure of that.

GIOVANNI. Dear Aunt, you are kind indeed.

DAFNE *returns from the platform.*

DAFNE. Here comes the Count of Pantellaria,
Scaling the terraces with seven-league strides.

MARCHESA (*in a flutter*). The Count! And I in morning disarray!
He must not see me! Where's my tire-woman?
You, Dafne, entertain him.

DAFNE. Nay, not I!
My sire presumptive—not to say presumptuous—
May entertain himself—
(*Picking up a hand-mirror on the table*, R.)
here's all he needs—
A mirror.

MARCHESA. Graceless girl!

DAFNE. Farewell, Giovanni!
[*Runs out*, L.

MARCHESA. Your cousin, Prince, is—— Oh, the Count! the Count!
She hurries off, L., *as the* COUNT *appears, mounting the steps, back centre. He comes forward hastily, and is evidently pleased to see the Prince.*

COUNT. Thank heaven! I sought Your Highness——

GIOVANNI. Captain Moro!
Are you recovered?

COUNT. Perfectly.

GIOVANNI. And you
Precede the Count of Pantellaria?

COUNT. When I appear, he's seldom far behind—
I *am* the Count.

GIOVANNI. You! then at Caromonte
You wore false colours!

COUNT. By the Duke's command.

GIOVANNI. The Duke's?

COUNT. He ordered me, myself unknown,
To judge how Caromonte had fulfilled
His trust.

GIOVANNI. To spy on me, and on my tutor!

COUNT. Suspend your censure, Prince—another time
I'll tell you all. Now I must seek the Duke.
But first—— (*Watching him closely.*)
I bring you greetings from your tutor,
And from the Lady Lidia.

GIOVANNI. Ha! You saw her——?

COUNT. This morning, when I rode from Caromonte
At sunrise.

GIOVANNI. Did she send no word?—no message?

COUNT. Only her humble service.

GIOVANNI. Seemed she sad,
Or merry?

COUNT. Neither merry, Prince, nor sad,
But gentle and serene.

GIOVANNI. So is she ever.

He dwells in silence upon the thought of her. The COUNT *watches him, raising his eyebrows; then says:*

COUNT. Pray, tell me—has your Uncle questioned you
About—about—well, things at Caromonte?

GIOVANNI. Not closely—I have had no private speech with him.

COUNT. Good, good! 'tis clear he waits for my report.
Named he the Lady Lidia?

GIOVANNI. Nay, not once.

COUNT. Spoke *you* of her?

GIOVANNI. Not to my Uncle—no!

COUNT. Then to——?

GIOVANNI. My Aunt. Ev'n now I spoke of her
To the Marchesa.

COUNT. And she——?

GIOVANNI. Promised me
To find a place for Lidia 'mongst her ladies.

COUNT. The mischief's done! I come too late!

GIOVANNI. What mean you?

COUNT. Too late! My instinct told me there was danger.

GIOVANNI. Danger? To whom? To what?

COUNT. To you—to all of us—
But chiefly to your heritage.

GIOVANNI. Because
I seek a place at Court for Lidia!

COUNT. Prince,
You know not what you do. Unearth a treasure—
A Phidian marble, or a priceless gem—
Here in the dukedom—think you it belongs
To you or me, the finder?

GIOVANNI. Surely, no—
The Duke may claim it.

COUNT. Aye, he may and will.
Now read my parable.

GIOVANNI (*after a pause*). No, it baffles me.

COUNT. What sculptor or what goldsmith ever carved,
Tell me, a treasure like the Lady Lidia?
At Caromonte, she's a matchless pearl
Hid in the deep. But bring her to the surface
And all the world will covet her.

GIOVANNI. Will covet——?

COUNT. His counsellors implore the Duke to marry.

GIOVANNI. You cannot mean——?

COUNT. I do!

GIOVANNI. The Duke, my Uncle,
Would——!

COUNT. Let the Lady Lidia come to Court,
And, mark me, Prince Giovanni, ere a month
Has passed, she'll claim your homage as your Duchess!

GIOVANNI. The Duke! An old man!

COUNT. Dukes are never old.
'Tis you are young.

GIOVANNI. Lidia would ne'er consent!

COUNT. The Duke is absolute. Her loyal father
Would bend her to his will.

GIOVANNI. No, no! You jest!
The thought's abhorrent! 'Tis unthinkable!

COUNT. Say rather, certain. You would have, my Prince,
Another Aunt, and soon another cousin—
Then—where were your succession?

GIOVANNI. My succession!
Think you, if all this horror came to pass,
I'd care a straw for my succession?

COUNT. Well,
A straw would be the measure of its worth.

GIOVANNI. What's to be done?

COUNT. Why, we must see to it
No rumour of the Pearl of Caromonte
Must reach the Duke.

GIOVANNI. But I have vaunted her
Already to my Aunt.

COUNT. Find her, and say
You have bethought you that her rustic graces
Were out of place at Court. Say that her father
Would hold it tyranny to drag her hither.
Say——

GIOVANNI. I will try; but I'm no apt dissembler.

COUNT. Make haste!

GIOVANNI. I will.

COUNT. Oh, luckless hour! The Duke!

As GIOVANNI *is hastening out,* L., *he almost runs into the arms of the* DUKE, *who enters, followed by a* GENTLEMAN.

DUKE. Whither away, my nephew?

GIOVANNI (*confused*). Sir, I pray,
Excuse me.

DUKE. Why, what weighty business claims you
So urgently?

GIOVANNI. Nothing, Your Grace.

DUKE. Then nothing
Can wait awhile. How comes it, Captain Moro,
You seek the Prince ere you report to me?

COUNT. My Lord, it was by chance——

DUKE. Your sudden sickness,
I trust, has left you?

COUNT. I am quite restored.

DUKE. And now, Giovanni, we must crave your pardon,
This gentleman and I—'tis time you knew
He is not Captain Moro, but the Count
Of Pantellaria, my chamberlain.

GIOVANNI (*embarrassed*). Indeed! The Count——

DUKE. Pardon our harmless ruse.
For certain ends of state, we deemed it best
That he unknown should visit Caromonte.
Of course you are surprised——

GIOVANNI. Surprised? Of course.

The DUKE *raises his eyebrows and watches them closely, evidently suspecting intelligence between them.*

DUKE. How sped your mission, Count?

COUNT. I found, Your Grace,
No reason for alarm.

DUKE. Then we may speak
Freely before the Prince?

COUNT. 'Twere best we should.

DUKE. Thus stands the case, then: rumours reached our ears
Of dangers in the air of Caromonte—
Of influences unwholesome for a youth
Destined to sovereignty. You tell me, Count,
Our fears were groundless?

COUNT. Utterly, Your Grace.
The girl is—well—in feature not amiss—
But otherwise (the Prince will bear me out)
A very rustic—awkward—ill at ease—
Now shy, now hoydenish. She has pride of birth
Without the grace of breeding. And withal,
She shows—to prove herself her father's daughter—
At times a strain of pedantry.

DUKE. Giovanni,
Call you the portrait just?

GIOVANNI (*patently embarrassed*). The Count is critical—
But—Lidia certainly is country bred,
And—as he says—Count Caromonte's daughter.

COUNT. The Prince is tongue-tied by a generous loyalty.
He means—Your Grace will readily divine—
More than he says.

The DUKE *is looking doubtfully from the one to the other, when the* GENTLEMAN, *who has gone out upon the platform, speaks.*

GENTLEMAN. A sail, my Lord! A sail!
A galley rounds the headland!

DUKE (*turning*). Ha! Her flag?

GENTLEMAN. Your own.

DUKE (*joining him on platform*). 'Tis so! It must be Antomarchi
Returned from Smyrna. He has made good speed.

He stands looking outward. Meanwhile the COUNT *speaks hurriedly to* GIOVANNI.

COUNT. Now—the Marchesa!

GIOVANNI. Where to find her?

COUNT (*pointing* L.). You
Go that way, Prince. (*Pointing* R.) I this way! All is lost
If we should fail to interpose before
She sees the Duke.

GIOVANNI. But surely she'll suspect
Something amiss, if I so suddenly
Should change my tune.

COUNT. Then tell the simple truth.
There's nothing like it. She no more than you,
Or I, would see a Duchess on the throne.
Make haste! Make sure!

With gestures of haste and secrecy, the COUNT *slips off* R., *while* GIOVANNI *goes out* L.

DUKE (*turning, and finding no one there*). What! both my gentlemen
Gone without leave or licence! Tell me, Giulio,
What devilment's afoot?

GIULIO. I know of none, sir.

DUKE (*as though sniffing an odour*). You scent no treason in the air?

The MARCHESA *appears, ascending the stair, back centre, and advances across the platform. She is followed by a* LADY, *who remains on the platform, talking to* GIULIO.

MARCHESA. Oh, brother!
I have sought you everywhere.

DUKE. Well, you have found me—
Is aught amiss?

MARCHESA. The very thing we feared!

DUKE. Feared? As to what?

MARCHESA. Giovanni's lost his head!
A fatal oversight it was to leave him
So long at Caromonte.

DUKE. Pantellaria
Reports no harm done.

MARCHESA. Why, then, Pantellaria
Knows nothing of the matter. Harm, forsooth!
Here, on this spot, not half an hour ago,
Giovanni poured forth odes and madrigals
In rapturous praise of Caromonte's daughter.

DUKE. So so!

MARCHESA. The minx has captured him.

DUKE. So ho!

MARCHESA. He has no eyes for Dafne—all is "Lidia."

DUKE. My mind misgave me.

MARCHESA. And, to crown the jest,
Submissively our duteous nephew craves
A simple boon—that I appoint the girl
One of my ladies—bring her here to Court!
What says Your Grace to that?

DUKE. I say, good sister,
Some mystery is here that we must fathom.
The Count is deep in it.

MARCHESA. The Count! is he
Leagued with Giovanni?

DUKE. Leagued? I cannot say;
But he pursues some subtle policy.
His cue is to dispraise the wench—he calls her
A rustic hoyden—and Giovanni feigned
To own the picture just.

MARCHESA. What can it mean?
If Pantellaria should play me false
After the grace—the condescension—I
Have shown him, let the upstart look to it!

DUKE. Poor wretch! He little knows the wrath he braves.
But, ere we sentence him, 'twere well to prove

His guilt. (*Calls.*) Go, Giulio—find Count Pantellaria,
And bring him hither. [*Exit* GIULIO, R.
I'll probe him, sister—
I'll dig a little pitfall in his path.

MARCHESA. What pitfall, brother?

DUKE. You shall see anon.
Greet him serenely, showing naught amiss;
Then leave us here alone—but presently
Steal back, and on the platform listening,
You'll hear him prove his innocence—or his guilt.

MARCHESA. To spy on him!

DUKE. You hesitate?

MARCHESA. Why should I?
Scruples are for plebeians, not for princes.

DUKE. Hush! he is here.
Enter COUNT PANTELLARIA, R.

COUNT. You summoned me, my Lord?
(*Seeing the* MARCHESA, *he advances to her with exaggerated gallantry.*)
At last, at last, I find my gracious lady,
My queen, my Ariadne!
Falls on one knee and kisses her hand.

MARCHESA. Hypocrite!

COUNT (*rising*). How? hypocrite?

MARCHESA. You made no haste to find me,
Though well you knew the fond disquietude
The rumour of your sickness roused in me.

COUNT. By all the gods, you wrong me! High and low,
I have scoured the palace in my eagerness
To greet my dear divinity.

DUKE. I am loth
To jar upon so tender a duet;
But, sister, for the moment, love must yield
To state-craft. I have matters of much weight
To canvas with the Count.

MARCHESA. So I'm dismissed!
Well, it is woman's lot.

COUNT. My Ariadne!
Say that my peace is made! Say you forgive me!

MARCHESA. Forgive! You say you're faultless?

COUNT. That's the worst
Of faults. Forgive my faultlessness!

MARCHESA. Beguiler!
She goes off, L., *followed by the* LADY, *who has remained in the background.*

DUKE. And now to business.

COUNT. I am all attention.

DUKE. About Giovanni——

COUNT. What of him?

DUKE. I fear
He is prematurely skilled in one great branch
Of state-craft——

COUNT. You would say?

DUKE. Dissimulation.
The boy has most audaciously thrown dust
In your keen eyes, my Pantellaria.

COUNT. How? In what way?

DUKE. He feigned indifference
To Caromonte's daughter—what's her name?

COUNT. Lidia.

DUKE. Aye, Lidia. You believed him heart-whole.

COUNT. Why, yes!

DUKE. The fact is, he's infatuated.

COUNT. Impossible!

DUKE. Both possible and true.
He poured out all his soul to the Marchesa.

COUNT. How he deceived me!

DUKE. To his Cousin Dafne
He pays no heed. Her mother's in despair.
Our plans go all awry.

The MARCHESA *has come up the steps and reappears on the platform. She ensconces herself behind one of the pillars. The* DUKE, *glancing over his shoulder, assures himself of her presence.*

COUNT (*unsuspecting*). What can we do?
Remove her? Banish her?

DUKE. 'Twould but enrage him,
And drive him to rebellion.

COUNT. Has Your Grace
Some wiser policy in view?

DUKE. There's one thing,
And one thing only, that can extricate us
Unfailingly from this embarrassment.
Can you divine it?

COUNT (*reflecting*). No—yes—no—you mean——?

DUKE. I mean that we must instantly contrive
To place her once for all beyond his reach—
In short, to marry her.

COUNT (*open-mouthed*). You cannot mean——!

DUKE. I mean just what I say: to find for her
A husband.

COUNT. Ah, I see!

DUKE. You seem amazed.

COUNT. In nowise.

DUKE. You approve?

COUNT. Why not?

DUKE. The scheme
Mislikes you?

COUNT. Not at all.

DUKE. Speak your whole mind,
I order you!

COUNT. A point of policy:
Your Grace is ever loth to play the tyrant:
Count Caromonte is of ancient race
And stainless loyalty. Will't not be held
An arbitrary and ungracious act
To force a marriage on the only child
Of such a man?

DUKE. Unless the husband be
So high in rank, so eminent in worth,
That to be matched with him must seem to her,
And to her father, an undreamt-of honour——

COUNT. And know you such a paragon?

DUKE. I have him
Here, 'neath my hand.
Laying his hand on the COUNT's *shoulder.*

COUNT (*in amazement*). Your Grace! You cannot mean——!
I misconceive you.

DUKE. You can scarce refuse
This service to my house. You say yourself
She's not ill-featured; and, for her rusticity,
Converse with your accomplished courtliness
Will polish her apace.

COUNT. Your Grace is kind—
But pray reflect——

DUKE. Is this your gratitude
For honours heaped on you?

COUNT. No, no—I am grateful—
Misjudge me not, I pray you—very gladly
To serve you would I make this—sacrifice.
But—the Marchesa?

DUKE. Pooh! Be frank with me—
'Twill scarcely break your heart to break a match
Of mere ambition. That which policy

Commended to you, now it discommends—
The larger policy excludes the less.

COUNT. My only policy is to serve Your Grace;
No other motive sways me——

DUKE. As for her,
My sister, she's a princess, and will see
What policy dictates. Her heart is set
On wedding Dafne to Giovanni. You,
Marrying this girl, remove the obstacle
To that dear dream.

COUNT. True, true!

DUKE. You hesitate?
I ask too much of you?

COUNT. No!—I consent,
On one condition—that you undertake
To make my peace with the Marchesa. She,
I fear me, reads our contract otherwise
Than you and I.

DUKE. You mean, her heart's engaged?

COUNT. Although a princess, she is still a woman,
And not, I fear me, quite insensible
To—(*modestly*) to my person.
The MARCHESA *rushes forward.*

MARCHESA. Wretch! I choke with rage!
Vainglorious—insect! Have I stooped for this?

COUNT (*stammering and taking refuge behind the* DUKE).
Your Grace.

MARCHESA. "Insensible to his person," quotha!
Duke, if the honour of your house is dear to you,
His person you will make insensible,
Lacking its head.

COUNT. Your Highness set a trap for me!

DUKE. Yes—and you walked head-foremost into it.
I'm in a maze! Falsehood on every hand,

Intrigue and treachery, environ me.
What does it mean?

MARCHESA. She's at the root of all—
This minx, this baggage, Caromonte's daughter!

DUKE. Aye, she it is that fills the air with lies
And treason——

MARCHESA. Hush! Giovanni!

GIOVANNI *has come up the steps from the back, and enters upon a silent scene,* DUKE, *centre,* MARCHESA, L., COUNT, R. *He looks from one to another, at a loss to imagine what has been going on. At last the* DUKE *addresses him with great suavity.*

DUKE. So, my nephew,
It seems you think Count Caromonte's girl,
Though underbred, pedantic, hoydenish,
A rustic wench, is fitted none the less
To shine among your Aunt-Marchesa's ladies,
An ornament to our Court?

GIOVANNI (*painfully embarrassed*). No, no, Your Grace—
That was a passing thought, an idle fancy—
I pray you, heed it not.

DUKE (*a sudden outburst*). As God's in heaven,
Heed it I will, young man! I cannot rest
Until this strange, elusive hamadryad,
This enigmatic nymph, that changes shape
Like clouds at sunset, stand on solid earth,
In disenchanted flesh and blood, before me.
Ho, Giulio!

(GIULIO *appears,* R.)

Ride with five men of my guard
Straightway to Caromonte. Take my signet ring;
(*Hands it to him.*)
The Count well knows it—say, I order him,
On his allegiance, to present himself
At Court without delay: and specially,
To bring with him his daughter. Haste, away!
Be here again ere set of sun to-morrow.

GUILIO. Trust me, Your Grace, I will. [*Exit* R.

DUKE. Meantime, Giovanni,
And you, Count, on this maxim meditate:
'Tis perilous to pluck the beard of princes.

MARCHESA. And with princesses to play fast and loose.

The DUKE *goes off,* R., *the* MARCHESA, L., *with a withering glare at the* COUNT. *He and* GIOVANNI, *regard each other ruefully.*

Curtain.

ACT III

The same scene. Late afternoon light.

DAFNE *is seated on the divan, touching a lute. The* COUNT OF PANTELLARIA *comes timidly and somewhat furtively up the steps at the back, sees her, and tiptoes forward.*

COUNT (*in a still small voice*). Contessa Dafne!

DAFNE (*looks round at him, laughing*). What! My lost, lamented
Father-that-might-have-been, your ghost, I see,
Still haunts the purlieus of your suicide.

COUNT. Have you the heart to mock a fallen man
Who comes to beg a service?

DAFNE. Beg a service
Of me? What power have I?

COUNT. The power, perchance,
To right a grievous wrong.

DAFNE. The victim?

COUNT. I!

DAFNE. What magic, think you, could restore to life
One who so resolutely has hanged himself?

COUNT. 'Tis but the simplest thing I beg—procure me
Speech with your lady mother.

DAFNE. Well, at least,
Whatever other gifts you have or lack,
You lack not courage, Count.

COUNT. Since yesterday
In her apartments she has barred herself
From all access.

DAFNE. Your dauntless heart, then, prompts you
To face the wounded tigress, and essay
Her reconcilement?

COUNT. Bring me to her presence,
And leave the rest to me.

DAFNE. Well, I like courage
Even in a step-sire who has lost his place.
I answer for no consequence. Your blood
Must be on your own head.

COUNT. I ask no better.

DAFNE. Stand there, then, in the shade.
Pointing to the upper corner, L.

COUNT. No, here I'll stand—
Ambush for ambush—she has shown the way.
Places himself behind the pillar where the MARCHESA *stood in Act II.*

DAFNE (*goes to the left and calls*). Ho, mother! mother!

MARCHESA (*within*). Where are you, my child?

DAFNE. Here, in the gallery. Come and see the sunset—
You've had no air to-day.
After a short pause, the MARCHESA *enters,* L. DAFNE *leads her over to the right, as though to obtain a better view. The* COUNT *slips down* L., *to cut off her retreat.*

DAFNE. Lo! how the west
Is all ablaze!

COUNT (*throwing himself on his knees*). My princess! Ariadne!

MARCHESA (*turning upon him with fury*).
You here! And, traitorous girl, are you in league,
With this base creature?

DAFNE. Not in league—oh no!
I told him he was rushing on his fate,
And now I leave him to it. (*Moving* L.)

MARCHESA. Dafne, stay!
I order you!

COUNT. Yes, yes, Contessa Dafne—
Hear what I have to say!

MARCHESA. What *can* you say, sir?
Think you fair words can expiate an outrage
That blood could scarce efface?

COUNT. I seek not pardon—
I only beg you to restrain your wrath
A little space, until you understand
The strange fatality that urged me on,
And made me seem disloyal.

MARCHESA. "Seem," forsooth!
Seems Satan black? Seem leopards spotted? Seems
The hooded cobra deadly?

COUNT. Ariadne!

MARCHESA. Is there no limit, then, to your effrontery?
You dare to use that name!

COUNT. Oh, hear me! hear me!
I did but play a part—a part I hated—
Endeavouring to avert a deadly peril
That threatened all of us—and chiefly you,
Ungrateful Ariadne!

MARCHESA. Peril! Bah!
What idle tale, what paltry subterfuge,
Is this?

COUNT (*rising from his knees*). Before another hour has passed,
Mayhap, you'll know the menace all too real
And imminent.

MARCHESA. Why talk in nods and frowns,
And ominous hints? Where lies the peril? Say!

COUNT. In one brief question let me answer you:
You'd welcome, doubtless, to your brother's Court,
A Duchess of Taranto?

MARCHESA (*panic-stricken*). Are you mad?
Duchess! The Duke will never wed! In vain
His Council has importuned him.

COUNT. In vain,
Because he found no lady to his mind.

MARCHESA. You mean that now——?

COUNT. I mean that, should he see——

MARCHESA. This country wench, this girl of Caromonte's,
There's danger that he might——?

COUNT. The gravest danger!

MARCHESA. What gnat has stung you all? Is she a sorceress?
Such women should be burnt!

COUNT. Wait till you see her!
She might—I do not say she will, Marchesa—
Disarm even you.

DAFNE (*bursts out laughing, and then says*). Forgive me, mother dear!
Who but must laugh to see the mischief wrought,
The schemes o'erthrown, the policies confounded,
By the mere rumour of a pretty face.
Or—is she pretty? One would rather guess
Some blood-congealing Gorgon.

GIOVANNI *rushes up the steps, back, and cries, the moment he sees the* MARCHESA.

GIOVANNI. Here is Lidia.
Dear Aunt! I waited in the outer court,
And bade the escort bring her straight to you.

(*He goes back to the stair-head as* LIDIA *appears, followed by* PETRONELLA, *and escorted by* GUILIO *and a couple of men-at-arms.* LIDIA *and* PETRONELLA *are in riding-dress.* GIOVANNI *gives* LIDIA *his hand and leads her forward. The* COUNT *goes to the back, and, with a gesture, dismisses the escort, who retire down the steps.*)

This, Aunt, is Lidia——

MARCHESA (*cutting in*). That Contessa Lidia
Whom fame so celebrates! Count Pantellaria
And Prince Giovanni are your heralds, madam,
Your trumpeters.

LIDIA. Count Pantellaria!
I never saw him.

COUNT (*stepping forward*). I am he, my lady——

LIDIA. You, Captain Moro!

COUNT. I entreat your pardon.

LIDIA (*turning from him to the* MARCHESA).
I cannot tell, Your Highness, if your greeting
Be kindly meant; but this, I pray, believe:
I came here utterly against my will,
Yielding to force. And if my summons hither
Was due to Prince Giovanni, I lament
The first unkindness he has ever done me.

GIOVANNI. Nay, Lidia, 'twas not I——

MARCHESA (*interrupting*). All things conspired
To claim your presence here. Where'er we turned,
The Duke and I, your name encountered us.
We could not rest till we had seen you.

LIDIA. Then
It was indeed the Duke's command that tore me,
My father absent, from my home?

GIOVANNI. No, Lidia—
The Duke's command was that Count Caromonte
Himself should come with you to Court.

LIDIA. 'Tis true,
My captors said so; but before they came
My father had set sail for Metaponto.
In vain did I implore them to await
His homecoming. The Duke himself, they said,
Had charged them to fulfil their task ere nightfall.
They have been punctual, and I am here.
A pause of embarrassment.

DAFNE (*goes up to* LIDIA, *and holds out both hands*). My name
is Dafne, Prince Giovanni's cousin,
And, if the Lady Lidia will accept me,
Henceforth her friend.

LIDIA (*taking her hands*). I think I never needed
A friend so much, nor found a kinder one.

DAFNE. Take off this riding-gear.
She disembarrasses LIDIA *of a veil, or hood, or both, and hands them to* PETRONELLA, *who stands by.* LIDIA *appears in a head-dress of perfect simplicity.*

COUNT (*apart to the* MARCHESA). Now do you see
The danger I foretold?
She does not answer, but gazes intently at LIDIA.

DAFNE (*to* LIDIA). Come, sit we here!
(*Leads her to the divan, and sits on her left, with an arm around her shoulder.*)
Now that, between you, you have brought to Court
The Lady Lidia, say, what would you with her,
Good people?

GIOVANNI. I did not——
COUNT. It was not I——
MARCHESA. Nor I——
Almost simultaneously.

DAFNE. It was the Duke, then? Solely he?
Go we to him!

GIOVANNI. Stop!
MARCHESA. Not so fast!
COUNT. Not yet!
Almost simultaneously.

LIDIA. You, Prince Giovanni,—you can bear me witness
How little I desired to come to Court.

GIOVANNI. Yes, Lidia—and I own I disobeyed you
In praying the Marchesa——

MARCHESA. My good nephew
Proposed for you a place among my ladies.

LIDIA. Which I, Your Highness, would, with all submission,
Have ventured to decline.

GIOVANNI. But afterwards,
The Count and I dispraised you to the Duke.
Or rather, he dispraised you—called you awkward,
Half hoyden and half pedant—I stood by
Making no protest.

LIDIA. And for that you claim
My thanks?

GIOVANNI. You do not understand.

LIDIA. No, truly,
I do not understand. I asked for naught
But to be left in peace. What need was there
That you should either praise me or dispraise me?
Was either part the part of a true friend?

GIOVANNI. No, Lidia: 'tis with reason you reproach me.
Yet, if I could explain——

LIDIA. Why can you not?

GIOVANNI. You would but laugh——

LIDIA. Indeed, indeed, Your Highness,
Laughter was never further from my mood.

GIOVANNI. Well, then, the Count—no, no, I cannot speak it—
'Tis ludicrous, yet hateful——

DAFNE. I will help you,
Cousin Giovanni. Thus it is, then, Lidia:
The Count of Pantellaria conceived
That, should the Duke his master come to know you,
He straightway would desire, decide, decree
That you should be his Duchess.

LIDIA. Duchess! I!
(*Bursts into a peal of laughter: then turns to the* MARCHESA.)
Pardon, Your Highness; but the Prince was right—
Who would not laugh at such a pleasantry?

DAFNE. Well, pleasantry or no, the Count and Prince,
Scheming to stand between you and your fate,
Lost themselves in a labyrinth of deceit,
And did what most they dreaded—set the Duke
On tenterhooks to see you.

LIDIA. But, Your Highness,
And you, Contessa Dafne—surely, surely
All this is but an idle jest. The Duke,
My gracious sovereign, will accept my homage,
And send me home again to-morrow—home
To Caromonte and my father.

The MARCHESA, *who has been devouring* LIDIA *with her eyes, does not reply. After a pause:*

DAFNE. Speak,
Mother! What say you?

MARCHESA (*reflectively*). "But an idle jest!"
Is it? I wonder!

LIDIA. How can it be other?
'Tis but in fairy-tales that princes wed
With beggar-maids; and were this fairy-land,
I am no beggar, but a simple girl,
A rustic noble's child.

MARCHESA (*disregarding her*). Count Pantellaria—
I say not it absolves you—far from that—
But when you scented danger—you were right.

LIDIA. Danger?

DAFNE. Yes, Lidia, you are dangerous—
And most of all because you do not know it.

LIDIA. I am bewildered.

COUNT (*to* MARCHESA). You begin at last,
Madam, to do me justice.

MARCHESA. Yes, indeed—
I now appreciate in all its grandeur
The sacrifice you nerved yourself to make
At the Duke's prompting.

GIOVANNI (*surprised*). Sacrifice!

COUNT (*hastily*). We stray
From the main question: what is to be done?

LIDIA. Suppose—I cannot think it—but suppose
Your fears were just, the Duke could never wed me
Against my will.

COUNT. Would you obey your father?

LIDIA. Assuredly.

COUNT. And if the Duke should beg
Count Caromonte for his daughter's hand,
What would his loyalty reply?

LIDIA (*taken aback*). I know not——

COUNT. You mean, you know!

LIDIA. Perhaps.

COUNT. Then cease to treat
The danger as a jest.

MARCHESA. But, Count, we are foolish
To talk of danger. We forget, this lady
Stands at a different point of view from ours.
She has recovered from her first surprise,
And what to us means fear, for her spells hope—
A hope beyond her dreams——

LIDIA. Stay, madam, stay!
You, Prince Giovanni, know me. Tell her Highness
She does me cruel wrong. This threat of marriage—
Of loveless marriage, is a horror to me,
And would be were the Duke an Emperor.
How to escape it? Tell me—tell me how?
I'll shrink from nothing.

GIOVANNI. Lidia, let us fly,
Now—on the instant! I renounce all claim
To sovereignty, inheritance——

LIDIA. No, no—
I will not be your ruin, Prince Giovanni—
Rather, I'll face my own.

DAFNE. Brave Lidia!

LIDIA. No,
Not brave, but desperate. I, with Petronella,
Will fly alone.

COUNT. Useless! the Duke would scour
The country for you.

DAFNE. There is but one way
To make all safe—and that's impossible.

LIDIA. What way?

DAFNE. 'Tis in yourself the danger lies,
And you'd escape it could you change yourself,
Become another woman. But, alas!
Who can do that?

GIOVANNI (*excited*). Why, Lidia can!

LIDIA (*trying to stop him*). Giovanni!

GIOVANNI. I must speak, and I will! Unnumbered women
Lurk in that single form. She can put on
Another face as one puts on a mask,
Another soul as one puts on a garment,
And cast them off as lightly!

LIDIA (*in distress*). Oh, no more!
Is this the chivalry you've learnt at Court,
Thus to betray——?

GIOVANNI. You cannot stop me, Lidia!
Marchesa! Dafne! You would never dream,
To see her now, how hateful she can make herself!
She'll play the shrew, the termagant, the vixen,
The haughty madam, the affected minx,
So absolutely, one might almost doubt
Which was the real Lidia.

DAFNE. Is this true?

LIDIA. 'Tis true that my dear father and the Prince
Have sometimes laughed to see me personate
This or that vanity or folly——

DAFNE. Well,
Be, then, another woman—let the Duke
Find your dispraisers in the right, and hold
Your praise an empty legend!

LIDIA. Can you counsel
Such levity, such disrespect? Meseems
There has been trickery enough already.

MARCHESA. Your shrinking, madam, from the ducal crown
Can scarce be violent, if you shrink still more
From such a harmless——

DAFNE. Mother, you are unjust.
Lidia shall not be goaded. But, in truth,
I think she might consent.

LIDIA. You have called yourself
My friend?

DAFNE. I *am* your friend.

LIDIA. And *as* my friend
You urge me on, sincerely, soberly,
To this audacious venture? (DAFNE *nods.*) Be it so!
To me it seems that failure and success
Are perilous alike; but since the blame,
If blame there be, will fall on me alone——

GIOVANNI. No, Lidia; I will share it. But take heart!
You cannot fail. Come after what come may,
The immediate's danger's past.

LIDIA (*to* GIOVANNI). Which of my vices
Shall I regale the Duke withal?

GIOVANNI. Superbia!
The very thing to affright him!

LIDIA. But my tires?
My head-dress?

DAFNE. Mother, you can furnish her
With vanities enough.

MARCHESA. Yes, I—or you.

DAFNE. Come, then, prepare. (*Leading her out,* L.) Go some one to the Duke,
And tell him that Count Caromonte's daughter
Awaits him here.

COUNT. Be that my task. [*Exit* R.

LIDIA. Giovanni,
You must be absent, else, were I unmask'd,
'Twould be apparent that you shared my guilt.

GIOVANNI. Yes, I will go; but not because I fear
Discovery.

LIDIA. Go—go. My mind misgives me,
But——

DAFNE. But the die is cast. Come, Lidia dear!
She and LIDIA *go off,* L., *followed by* PETRONELLA. *The* MARCHESA *claps her hands. A servant enters,* L.

MARCHESA. Lights ho!
The servant beckons to another. They light the candles in the sconces at the back, and also lower, light and haul up again the chandelier (or coloured lantern) in the centre, which throws a much stronger light than the other candles. Meanwhile:

GIOVANNI. You were not kind to Lidia, Aunt;
How has she angered you?

MARCHESA. No, no, Giovanni,
She has not angered me. 'Tis true I find her—
Well—inconvenient—in more ways than one.

GIOVANNI. You know, at least, that when I praised her to you
I spoke the simple truth.

MARCHESA. Perhaps you did.
But simple truth is often, as you'll find,
Of all things the most inconvenient. Hush!
The Duke!

GIOVANNI. I am gone!

He goes out by the platform and down the steps. The DUKE, *ushered in by* COUNT PANTELLARIA, *enters,* R. *The* COUNT *also slips off by the platform.*

DUKE. Ah, sister—you have seen
This marvel-maid that's turned our little world
All upside-down?

MARCHESA. Yes, brother, I have seen her.

DUKE. Well—and what say you?

MARCHESA. Why, Your Grace well knows,
A woman's judgment of another woman
Is seldom just.

DUKE. I have not hitherto
Found you distrust your insight.

MARCHESA. I prefer
In this case to say nothing.

DUKE. More and more
The mystery confounds me. You—even you—
Before this girl stand tongue-tied. Is she, then,
Some strange enchantress?

MARCHESA. You shall see and judge.

DAFNE *leads* LIDIA *in,* L., *in a fantastic head-dress, yet not so extravagant as that of Superbia in Act I. She wears an enormous hoop, and high-heeled shoes which notably alter her stature. Her fingers are covered with rings, and she is markedly made-up. Though not an outrageous caricature, she is a painful contrast to the natural* LIDIA.

DAFNE. This, Uncle, is Count Caromonte's daughter,
The Lady Lidia. She has come to Court,
Obedient to your call.

LIDIA *makes an elaborately artificial curtsy, and then speaks in an audible whisper to* DAFNE.

LIDIA. Ought I to kiss
His Lordship's hand?

DAFNE *nods.* LIDIA *awkwardly possesses herself of the* DUKE'S *hand, he meanwhile standing, petrified, and kisses it, with another low curtsy.*

MARCHESA. Come, Dafne, we will leave
The Duke to make acquaintance with his guest.
They go off, L., *as naturally as they can.*

DUKE. I do not see your father with you, madam,
Yet I commanded him——

LIDIA (*speaking with uncontrollable volubility, in an affected, high-pitched voice, and with a mincing accent*).
My noble sire
Sailed, may it please Your Grace, two days ago
For Metaponto; and the captain gentleman
Who brought Your Grace's summons would not bide
For his return. He said Your Grace enjoined
The utmost festination.

DUKE. What is that?

LIDIA. Why, speed, celerity!

DUKE. Ah! Pardon me—
My Latin's rusty. I desired, indeed,
With some impatience, the felicity
I now enjoy, of seeing face to face
A lady so renowned.

LIDIA. Your Grace o'erwhelms me!
Renowned! Oh la! But I confess I yearned
To come to Court; for truly in the country
The men are yokels and the women sluts,
Devoid of breeding: you would hardly guess,
Your Grace, how their rusticity offends
Persons of delicate sensibilities.

DUKE (*seating himself on the divan*). So your ambition is to shine at Court?

LIDIA (*taking a chair and planting herself, uninvited, in front of him*). To shine I will not say, for modesty
Has always been, of all the virtues, that
To which I am most addicted. But in truth

My soul aspires, the Court's my native hemisphere,
And rural life to me is banishment.
I feel myself—Your Grace will understand—
Save for my sex, like Ovid 'mong the Scythians.

DUKE. Your ladyship has learning?

LIDIA. Nay, Your Grace,
Call it not learning! True, my noble sire
Has made me mistress of the languages—
I know my Plato, my Thucydides,
My Cicero, my Flaccus, Juvenal,
My Mantuan, my Patavine, my——

DUKE. Hold!
We'll keep the catalogue for another time,
So please you. For the nonce, I fain would learn
Whether my nephew, Prince Giovanni, shared
Your studies?

LIDIA. Prince Giovanni? Yes, dear child,
He battled bravely with his accidence.
But scholarship—the relish for the tongues—
Your Grace well knows—is not for every one.
He toiled, as Flaccus phrases it, *invita*
Minerva—or, in the vernacular,
Against the grain.

DUKE. How kindly you translate for me!
Giovanni, it would seem, in the vernacular,
Is little better than a dunce.

LIDIA. Oh, no!
Your Grace's kinsman! All I meant was this:
His hawk, his horse, his hound were more to him
Than all the poets and philosophers.
Your Grace did wisely—could Your Grace, indeed,
Do otherwise?—in ordering him back
To Court. My noble sire and I combined,
Strive as we might, could not preserve his manners
From just a shade, the merest, veriest tinge
Of rustical inelegance.

DUKE. The Court,
You think, will mend his breeding?

LIDIA (*minaudant*). He has but
To make Your Grace his pattern, to acquire
The poise, the polish, the grand air, that I
Sought vainly to impart to him. In truth—
'Twixt you and me, Your Grace—the Prince preferred
The talk of horseboys, grooms and kennel-men
To my society!

DUKE. Incredible!

LIDIA. Strange, and yet true! Alas, the careless gods
Scatter their gifts at random. To the Prince,
Born in the purple, they denied ambition.
To me they gave, among my cradle-gifts,
The soul of Cleopatra or Semiramis.
My blood, Your Grace well knows, is of the noblest—
We trace our lineage back to Charlemagne—
And something in my soaring soul assures me
Our late eclipse will not endure for ever.
Your Grace will understand——

DUKE (*rising*). No, madam, no!
Your soaring soul leaves mine too far behind.
And now my duties call me—I must leave you.
My sister, the Marchesa, and my niece
Will entertain you till your noble sire
Shall come for you——

LIDIA (*who has also risen*). Shall come for me! Your Grace,
Say not that you design to send me home!
After one fleeting glimpse of heaven, to banish me
Back to the rustical, the vulgar earth!
That were barbarity! The Prince, your nephew,
Spoke of a place among your sister's ladies——

DUKE. The Prince spoke rashly——

LIDIA (*as though enraged*). Is it even so?
This petty Court rejects me! Well, my Lord,
This let me tell you—Fate reserves for me

Some larger, more illustrious hemisphere!
I bid Your Grace adieu! I humbly beg
Your licence to return at dawn to-morrow
To Caromonte. I will not await
My father's coming——

DUKE (*interrupting*). Hark! what noise is that?

A slight clash of swords, and a loud altercation are heard from the stair at the back, the voices those of COUNT CAROMONTE *and* GIULIO.

CAROMONTE (*still unseen*). You brought her here, you say?
Then I will follow!
No lackey's sword shall stay me!

DUKE (*calls out*). Who goes there!

LIDIA (*shrinking into the corner, back* L., *in unaffected terror*). Oh, God! my father!

CAROMONTE, *sword in hand, appears in the moonlight at the top of the steps, thrusting* GIULIO *aside.*

DUKE (*his hand on his sword-hilt*). Stand there!

CAROMONTE, *seeing the* DUKE, *sheathes his sword and rushes forward. He does not see* LIDIA.

CAROMONTE (*kneeling to the* DUKE). Pardon! pardon,
Your Grace! A father, seeking his lost child,
Kneels at your judgment seat!

DUKE. Here *is* your daughter,
Count Caromonte.

CAROMONTE *turns, sees her, and springs up.*

CAROMONTE. This my daughter! This!

LIDIA (*sinking on her knees before him*). Your most unhappy daughter.

CAROMONTE. God in heaven!
Is this my Lidia? This bedizened thing!
What devilish enchantment have we here?
Or rather—what audacious mummery?
Speak, wretched girl!

DUKE. Stay! tell me first *your* tale,
Old man! How come you here? What part have you
In this ill-omened plot?

CAROMONTE. Part? I have none.
I sailed for Metaponto yesterday,
Intending three days' stay. A black scirocco
Drove back my bark. Arrived at home, I found
No Lidia, but a letter waiting me,
To tell me that Your Grace's men-at-arms,
Almost by force, were bearing her to Court.
I sprang to horse: my spurs, you see, are red!
And that is all I know.

DUKE. Now, mistress, you!
It seems that from your "noble sire" you have hidden
Your eagerness to shine at Court. Is he,
Or I, your dupe?

LIDIA, *still kneeling, has as far as possible divested herself of her gewgaws. She now arises, somewhat dishevelled, but in the main like herself.*

CAROMONTE. Speak, Lidia! You were ever
A dutiful, a modest girl—how comes it
I find you thus disgraced?

LIDIA (*disjointedly*). Disgraced indeed!
My shame o'erwhelms me. All the fault is mine.
My idle vanity—you know, my father,
My trick of personation you yourself
Have praised—and I was angered that His Grace
Should hale me hither like a criminal—
I thought—my sober judgment stands aghast
At such effrontery—I thought to rouse
Disgust in him, and make him straightway send me
Back to my home, to Caromonte.

DUKE. Count,
Think you, is this the truth?

CAROMONTE. I would have staked
My life on Lidia's truthfulness—but no!
So impudent a prank is too unlike her.

In part at least, if not throughout her tale,
I think she is lying.

DUKE (*vehemently*). I am sure she is!
Some plot, some treachery, lies behind it all,
And, if I die for't, I'll unravel it!
Ho, there! Marchesa! Dafne!—Giulio, call
The guard! Go, find Count Pantellaria
And Prince Giovanni, and arrest them both!
Place sentinels at their chamber doors—I'll question them
Myself, apart.

Ever since the entrance of CAROMONTE, GIULIO *has stood at the stair-head, watching the scene. He now salutes and goes off,* R. *Shortly before his exit, the* MARCHESA *and* DAFNE *enter,* L.

MARCHESA. Why, brother, what is this?

DUKE. Yes, what is this? That's what I mean to learn—
For you, even you, I much misdoubt, Marchesa,
Are in the plot. Some game of hoodman-blind
Is here afoot, and I the victim of it.
But you shall see I am not lightly hoodwinked!
You shall repent——!

MARCHESA. Your Grace! my brother! hear me——

DUKE. Silence to-night! First I will wring the truth
From Pantellaria and Giovanni. You
Shall speak to-morrow. To your chambers now!
(*To* CAROMONTE) Your daughter, Count, I leave to your surveillance.
Keep her apart from these two—Highnesses,
Lest she concoct with them some devilment.
Follow me now.—Ladies, you've had your jest
To-day—to-morrow comes the reckoning!

The MARCHESA *stands utterly crestfallen,* L. DAFNE, *looking at her, struggles to suppress her laughter.* LIDIA *has run, weeping, to her father's arms. They are following the* DUKE *out,* R., *as*

The Curtain falls.

ACT IV

The same scene. Morning light.

The DUKE *is pacing up and down. The* MARCHESA, DAFNE, GIOVANNI, PANTELLARIA *(in this order, from left to right) are seated in a row, more or less like prisoners at the bar.*

DUKE. You'd have me think, then, as I understand,
That you have earned my gratitude?

MARCHESA. I, at least,
Deserve no censure.

DUKE. 'Twas your Christian duty
To shield me from temptation?

MARCHESA. So I thought,
And so I think.

DUKE. Do you, too, plead not guilty,
Contessa Dafne?

DAFNE. Uncle, I confess
I loved the jest, and had but little thought
On consequences. But my chiefest guilt
Was that I took the lead in tempting Lidia
To play a part unworthy of her.

DUKE. So
You sinned 'gainst her, not me?

DAFNE. You have said it, Uncle.

DUKE. And Prince Giovanni? May we hear your plea?

GIOVANNI. One single plea is mine—my love for Lidia.
I dreamt not of it, till you parted us;
But then a sudden revelation told me
That dukedoms, empires, life itself were naught
To me, without my friend, my guardian angel,
The lodestar of my soul.

DUKE. And she? She loved you?

GIOVANNI. She loved me as a sister, but rebuked me
With all the sternness in her gentle nature,
When I rebelled against Your Grace's will
That severed us. She would not suffer me
To speak, to think, of summoning her to Court.
Whoever erred, Lidia is blameless. I—
My folly and my cowardice—have enmeshed her
In wiles she dreamed not of. I'd plead my youth,
But she is younger still.

DUKE. Now let us hear
Count Pantellaria's defence?

MARCHESA. I, too,
Would gladly learn it.

COUNT. My defence, Your Grace?
Pray tell me first of what *of*fence I stand
Accused, unless it be a too unbounded
Devotion to Your Grace's interests,
Your Grace's will. Your fixed and firm aversion
From marriage well I knew——

DUKE. And feared this girl
Might marry me against my will?

COUNT. You hold
The thought preposterous? How many a man—
Nay more, how many a duke—think you, my Lord,
Against his will has worn the chains of wedlock?

DUKE. Which you, to save me, would yourself have donned,
Thus sacrificing all your tender hopes,
Your high ambitions! Selfless, matchless friend!
My gratitude wellnigh unmans me.
(*With a sudden change from sugared irony to vehemence*) But—
One thing from all this tangled coil results:
The girl who, howsoe'er unwillingly,
Dwells in the heart of it, is something more
Than common—has an influence all her own,

Resistless, not to men alone, but women.
Now I, my friends, am of heroic mood:
I scorn to flee from danger, love to face it.
Wherefore I am resolved to meet this Lidia
In her own person, and myself decide
Wherein her magic lies.
(*As though lost in reflection.*)
Almost, it seems
As if the Fates had spun a subtle web
To bring her to me in a blaze of light,
A halo of renown. The gods' designs
Who shall unravel? Seeing I've refrained
So long from marriage, can it be——? Who knows?
I prithee, Dafne, find Count Caromonte,
And say I crave some conference with his daughter,
Here and alone.

[DAFNE *goes off*, R.

MARCHESA. But this is madness, brother!

DUKE. Is it? Perhaps. When all the world is mad,
Shall I be sane? I love not singularity.

MARCHESA (*as she goes off*, L.). I wash my hands of it.

DUKE (*when she is gone*). So, at the last,
They are apt to do, who thrust superfluous fingers
In other people's pies.

GIOVANNI (*as he goes towards the platform*). Uncle, have pity!
Drive me not to despair!

DUKE. Greatness, my nephew,
Brings with it pains a lowlier lot escapes.
I have a duty to the commonwealth
And to our race. As yet I know not clearly
What duty craves of me; but when I know,
Both I and you must bow to her decree.

[GIOVANNI *goes off, disconsolate, down the steps.*

COUNT (*coming forward*). Your Grace——

DUKE. You still would interpose, dear Count,
Between me and my destiny? No, no—

I'll meet with fortitude whate'er awaits me,
And leave you free to mind your own affairs,
Not, I imagine, quite uncomplicated.

The COUNT *shrugs his shoulders and follows* GIOVANNI.

A moment's pause, while the DUKE *walks up and down, his hands behind his back, reflecting. Then* CAROMONTE *enters,* R., *leading in* LIDIA, *who curtsies, but not deeply.*

CAROMONTE. My liege, I bring you here my penitent child,
Misguided—may I say?—rather than guilty.

DUKE. Of that, Count Caromonte, I must judge—
Such is my will.

CAROMONTE. I bow to it, Your Grace;
Yet trust my faithful service may deflect
Your justice on the side of lenity.

DUKE. It shall not be forgotten.

CAROMONTE (*apart to* LIDIA, *kissing her forehead*).
Courage, Lidia!
Be your true self! [*Exit* R.

The DUKE *takes one or two more turns up and down the room, in silence; then turns upon* LIDIA *who is standing, dejected,* R.

DUKE. You do not kiss my hand,
As yesterday you did.

LIDIA. Must yesterday
Stain all my days to follow?

DUKE. God Himself
Could not expunge it from the calendar.

LIDIA. Princes should be more merciful than God,
Since they, too, may need mercy.

DUKE. So you thought
You were a captive in an ogre's den,
And every trick of cozenage was lawful

That made for your escape? You thought to fool
The stupid ogre, and then laugh at him
With your accomplices?

LIDIA. Not *with* them—no!
I thought I'd never see the Court again.

DUKE. But, back at Caromonte, you'd have laughed
To think how wise we princes deemed ourselves,
And how a girl could trick us.

LIDIA. Put it so,
Sir, if you must. But I—I do not think
That, back at Caromonte, I'd have laughed.

DUKE. Know you that playing with a prince's trust,
And fooling him, is—treason?

LIDIA. If it be,
Allot my punishment. I can but say
I meant no ill to you. My one desire
Was to escape without delay from Court,
Lest Prince Giovanni suffer.

DUKE. Prince Giovanni!

LIDIA. He thought our childish friendship could endure.
I knew it must not—knew he must forget me
As quickly as he might.

DUKE. He could not bear,
You mean, to see you as his uncle's bride?

LIDIA. Must you recall that foolishness? It needed
No such fantastic fear to make me shun
The Court.

DUKE. You're sure the fear, then, was fantastic?

LIDIA. Why must you play with me as cat with mouse?
My fault is patent—must my punishment
Be more humiliation?

DUKE. Yesterday
"Your Grace," "Your Grace" was ever on your lips;
To-day you pay me not the commonest meed
Of courtesy.

LIDIA. Can I be too unlike
What yesterday I was? I beg you, sir,
To pass your judgment on me, and dismiss me.

DUKE. My judgment?

LIDIA. Yes.

DUKE. You challenge it?

LIDIA. I do.

DUKE. What should you say, then, were my judgment this:
"In expiation of the grievous crime
Of cozening her liege lord and sovereign,
The Lady Lidia is condemned to share
The ridicule her arts have brought upon him,
Together with all other pains and privileges
Appurtenant to the Dukedom of Taranto,
By entering with him into holy wedlock,
And reigning as his Duchess"?

LIDIA (*after a pause*). Ah, my Lord,
I see you are pleasant—you retaliate
For my irreverence in mocking you,
By making me the butt for mockery.
Well, I rejoice to find you hold my error
A theme for mirth. You feel I have blushed enough,
And deign to let me smile with you in parting.
I thank Your Grace (*a deep curtsy*) and humbly take
my leave. (*She turns away.*)

DUKE. No! stay! I do not grant you leave!

LIDIA. You have
Further commands for me?

DUKE. Yes; I command you
To lend a patient hearing to my suit,
And answer it in sober earnestness,
As I, believe me, urge it.

LIDIA. You are merciless.
Well, since no less contents you, I will feign
To take your suit in earnest, and will feign
To give it answer no less solemnly,

Thus: "With all dutiful submission, I
Decline the honour of your proffered hand,
Your Dukedom and its high appurtenances."
Your Grace is answered.

DUKE. Headstrong girl! will nought
Persuade you that I jest not?

LIDIA. That, indeed,
Were treason—to suppose Your Grace in earnest.

DUKE (*takes her hand and leads her over to the divan*, L.).
Lidia, sit here and listen—I, your Prince,
Command it! When I saw you yesterday,
I was not wholly hoodwinked. 'Neath the mask,
The antic mask, I saw your peerless beauty,
And guessed that there was something hid from me,
Some riddle that I could not read. To-day,
All being manifest, I see in you
A girl in years, and yet a noble woman,
Compact of wisdom, courage, dignity,
All virtues and all graces of a Queen.
Nay, listen!—Since I deemed that such a woman
Could not be found, were proclamation made
Through all the length and breadth of Italy,
I had renounced remarriage, and resolved
To let the dukedom pass to young Giovanni,
My nephew. But no promise nor no law
Binds me to that design. You see, my hair
Is scarcely grizzled. All the best of life
Yet lies before me—share it with me, Lidia!
Make my reign glorious, make my manhood happy,
My race a race of heaven-appointed princes.
You know me not, you love me not, you say?
Oh, but you shall—shall know me and shall love me.
Love begets love; and he—yon foolish Count—
Deemed rightly when he deemed that for the Duke
To see you were to love you.
(LIDIA *bursts into tears.*)
Ha! you weep!
Your heart is touched at last.

LIDIA. What shall I say?
Now first I see the greatness of my fault,
And in your magnanimity, your goodness,
I find my bitter punishment.

DUKE. Nay, nay—
Ere long we'll laugh together in remembering
How first we met, how first we set our wits
Against each other—and, in very truth,
Had not your father burst upon the scene,
I think you had won the day.

LIDIA. Would that I had!
For then you quickly had forgotten me.
Now—for I think, my Lord, you are sincere—
You will remember me, I fear, with pain.

DUKE. Remember you?

LIDIA. When I am gone.

DUKE. You mean——?

LIDIA. I mean that you have won my reverence,
My gratitude, all that my heart can give you—
But I can never, never be your wife.

DUKE. You will not wed me?

LIDIA. Cannot, must not, will not.

DUKE. Your reasons——?

LIDIA. Must be secret, even from you.

DUKE. Lidia, if I should call your father hither,
And beg of him your hand in marriage——?

LIDIA. He
Would joyfully accord it.

DUKE. Then——?

LIDIA. The thought,
When yesterday Count Pantellaria
Menaced me with it, did indeed appal me.
But now it has no terrors for me—now

I know you, and I know you great and generous.
You want a free-born woman for your mate,
Not a poor slave who wears abhorrëd chains.

DUKE. Abhorrëd! Is my love abhorrent to you?

LIDIA. It makes me very proud and very sad—
Proud that you so esteem me; sad to know
That I can give you but a subject's love,
Never a wife's.

DUKE. Ah, then I see too clearly
The truth! The secret I must never know
Too easily I guess! You love Giovanni!
Perhaps are plighted to him.

LIDIA. No, my Lord!
The Prince and I were comrades—nothing more.

DUKE. But you *do* love him!

LIDIA. Did I call you generous
A moment since? Must I unsay the word?
I tell the secrets of my heart to God,
Not to an earthly prince. All that concerns you
Is this: when I return to Caromonte
I promise you, by all my hopes of heaven,
If my endeavour so can order it,
Never to see Giovanni's face again,
Never to cross his path. No act or thought
Of mine shall come between him and his birthright,
His duty to his race.

During her last words—but not overhearing them— GIOVANNI *appears, coming hastily up the steps at the back. He now rushes forward in great excitement.*

GIOVANNI. Lidia, my Lidia!
I can endure this agony no longer—
No longer shall he torture you! Your Highness,
Do with me what you will! Imprison—banish me!
What care I for inheritance or rule,
For life itself, if heartless, pitiless power

Robs me of all the joy, the worth of life,
In parting me from Lidia.

LIDIA (*wringing her hands*). Oh, Giovanni,
What have you done! (*Turning to the* DUKE) Sir, be a prince indeed,
And pardon——

DUKE (*vehemently*). Stop, I order you! (*To* GIOVANNI) Young man,
I take you at your word—I banish you,
Dismiss you from the order of succession,
And leave you to your fate. For you, my lady,
You overrate my generosity.
Your father's loyalty I know will grant me
That which I crave, and you can but submit.

GIOVANNI. That which you crave?

DUKE. This lady's hand.

GIOVANNI. No, no!
Accursed tyrant, that shall never be!
Draws his dagger, and is making at the DUKE, *when* LIDIA *seizes his arm.*

LIDIA. Giovanni, dear Giovanni, drop your dagger
And listen to me! (*He lets the dagger fall.*)
You, my Lord, as well.

DUKE. Pick up that plaything, sir, and hand it to me.
(GIOVANNI *stands sullenly immovable.* LIDIA *picks up the dagger and hands it to the* DUKE, *who tosses it down on the table,* R.)
Edged tools are not for boys.
LIDIA *takes* GIOVANNI'S *left hand in her right, and faces the* DUKE.

LIDIA. Nor power for men
Who tyrannously abuse it. One brief moment
Has changed the world for me. You say my father
Will grant you what you crave; and, yesterday,
My duty, so I thought, would have constrained me

To yield to his commands. To-day, not so!
I would not wed you though my father dragged me
In fetters to the altar! I would die
Before I did myself so huge a wrong.
When Prince Giovanni still was Prince Giovanni
I bade him wear the bonds of princely birth
In dutiful submission, and forget
The poor girl-playmate of his youth, or think of her
But as a sister lost to him for ever.
But now the scene is changed! His loving kinsman,
Loving no more, becomes his unjust judge,
Strips him of rank and heritage, and sends him
Forth into exile. Well, Your Highness, I
Go with him—or to prison, if your power
Should thus see fit to punish our rebellion.
You read (*red*) my secret rightly, sir—
(*Putting her arm round* GIOVANNI'S *shoulder.*)
I love you,
Dear, dear Giovanni, faithful, kind Giovanni!
It wrung my heart to lose you: to regain you,
Though all the world besides be lost to us,
Is joy unspeakable.

GIOVANNI (*takes her in his arms and kisses her*). My brave, sweet Lidia!
My friend, my love, my mate!

LIDIA. Sir, you have seen
The first kiss of a loving girl and boy
Who owe to you their happiness, whate'er
The doom that now awaits them.

They stand side by side and hand in hand, facing the DUKE, *who paces up and down two or three times, with his hands behind his back, scowling at them, like a baffled tyrant. At last he comes to a resolve, claps his hands, and calls.*

DUKE. Ho, there! Giulio!

(*After a certain time, during which the* DUKE *casts black glances at them over his shoulder,* GIULIO *appears,* R.)

Summon the Count of Caromonte hither—
Also Count Pantellaria.

(*Exit* GIULIO, R. *The* DUKE *crosses to the left and calls.*)

Marchesa,
I crave your presence!
(*To* GIOVANNI) Pick your dagger up,
And sheathe it. Were that act of madness known
Your head would pay for it. Your rank rebellion
Is crime enough without that crown to it.

(GIOVANNI *crosses and sheathes his dagger. As he is returning to* LIDIA, *the* DUKE *interposes.*)

Nay, stand apart! Shall two unblushing rebels
Defy me in the face of all the world?

COUNT CAROMONTE *enters*, R.

CAROMONTE. Your Grace desires my presence?

DUKE. Sir, I do.
I but await the coming of my chamberlain,
Count Pantellaria, and of my sister,
Ere I explain my summons.

(PANTELLARIA *enters*, R., *almost simultaneously with the appearance of the* MARCHESA *and* DAFNE, L. GIULIO *enters after* PANTELLARIA.)

Sister, come—
Affairs of state require your presence. Giulio
Two chairs here side by side.

(*He indicates by gestures that* GIULIO *is to place the two chairs, which stand against the pillars at the back, the centre of the scene.* GIULIO *does so. The* DUKE *gives the* MARCHESA *his hand, and leads her to the left-hand chair.*)

Be seated, madam.

(*He himself sits in the right-hand chair.* DAFNE *stands a little behind her mother;* CARMONTE *near* LIDIA, *down* L., GIOVANNI *and* PANTELLARIA, R.)

With all formality, Count Caromonte,
In presence of these noble witnesses,
I beg for your consent——

GIOVANNI (*a despairing cry*). No, no—'tis monstrous!

DUKE (*unperturbed*). To the betrothal of your daughter, Lidia,
With this hot-headed boy.

CAROMONTE. The Prince!

GIOVANNI (*petrified*). With me!

DUKE. You know him, sir, and know as well as I
How slight are his deserts. But should she wait
To find her peer, 'tis like she'd die a maid;
And—failing here alone in wisdom—she
Has given her heart to him. I ask your blessing
Upon their union.

CAROMONTE. Lidia, is this the truth?

(LIDIA, *who has stood immovable, though she and* GIOVANNI *have exchanged glances of amazement and joy, runs to her father's arms and smiles up at him.*)

What can I say, Your Grace? I am overjoyed.
Her blood will leave no stain upon your scutcheon,
And—

(*Looking to* GIOVANNI *who crosses and takes his outstretched hand*)

by God's grace, dear boy, the best of daughters
Will make the best of wives.

LIDIA *takes* GIOVANNI'S *right hand in her left, and leads him before the* DUKE, *saying:*

LIDIA. Giovanni, kneel!

(GIOVANNI *kneels straight in front of the* DUKE, LIDIA *a little to the* DUKE'S *left, therefore somewhat in profile.*)

(*With downcast eyes*) Your Grace, two happy children, on their knees,
Ask your forgiveness for their ignorant errors.
(*Then, looking up at him*) And, should you know of any one who needs
Forgiveness at their hands, assure him of it.

DUKE (*rising, and assisting her*). Rise, Lidia—and Giovanni, turn away—
I must impart a secret to my niece.
(*Leads her forward and speaks to her apart.*)
You said I played with you as cat with mouse.
No, Lidia—'twas in earnest that I pleaded.
Had your dear heart been yours to give, I think
I might have won it. But that petulant boy
Had youth and long affection on his side;
And who could dream of finding happiness
In sundering youth from youth? None but a madman.
Dear Lidia, give me any crumbs of love
Your heart can spare—and make a man of him!
(*Then he says aloud.*)
Princess, I kiss your hand— (*Does so, saying apart*)
since you refuse
That courtesy to me.

Turns and talks apart to CAROMONTE. *The* MARCHESA *has watched the earlier part of the scene with helpless indignation. At the line "will make the best of wives," she speaks angrily to* DAFNE, *who replies laughingly. At the line "a secret to my niece,"* DAFNE *comes forward and watches the* DUKE *and* LIDIA, *while* PANTELLARIA *steals up behind the* MARCHESA'S *seat and begins pleading with her. When the* DUKE *leaves* LIDIA, DAFNE *comes forward and embraces her.*

DAFNE. I, dearest Lidia,
Unwittingly have helped you to your love;
And you, unwittingly, have done the like
By me—my mother now can scarce oppose
My marriage with Giannotto.

LIDIA. Dearest Dafne!
My friend in need, my friend for evermore.

The MARCHESA *has gradually softened to the* COUNT, *and they now come forward.*

COUNT. Your Grace, this noble lady has forgiven
My trespasses—if trespasses they were.

MARCHESA. "*If* trespasses," forsooth! He ought to say,
My Lord, that he's confessed and been absolved.

DUKE. Well, well; forgiveness is in fashion; I
Pardon you, Count—you are still my chamberlain.
Take order straightway for the Prince's marriage.
And—

(*With intention, looking towards* LIDIA, *who has joined* GIOVANNI)

see that no rusticity offend
Persons of delicate sensibilities.

LIDIA. Spare me, Your Grace. Be that exploit for ever
Wiped from our memories.

DUKE (*mimicking the Superbia manner*). Since modesty
Has always been, of all the virtues, that
To which you're most addicted.

LIDIA (*with a touch of Superbia*). Sir, beware!
Or that accomplished lady may return
To Court, her native hemisphere.

DUKE (*in panic*). Forbid it,
Merciful Heaven!

Curtain.

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